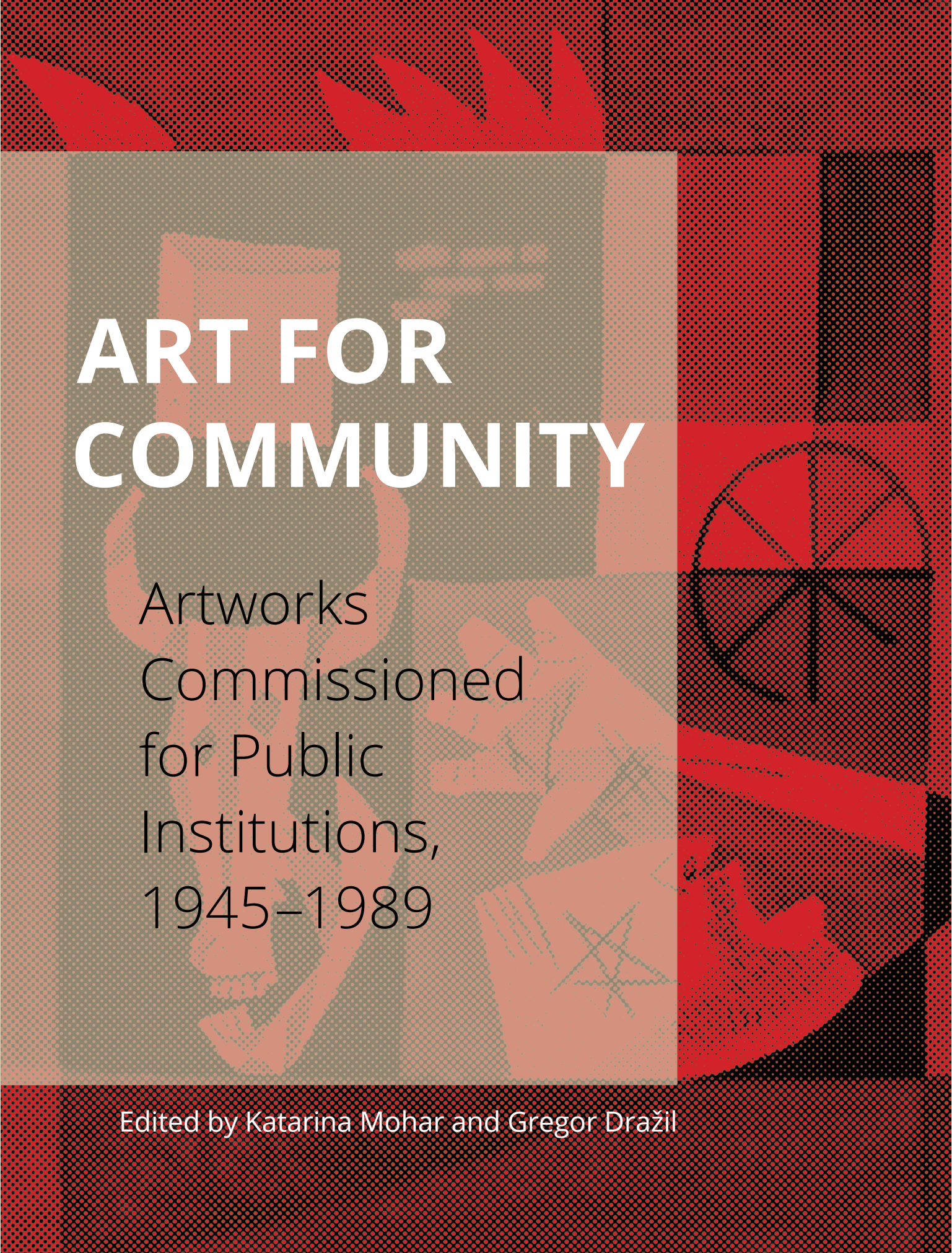




ART FOR COMMUNITY

Artworks
Commissioned
for Public
Institutions,
1945–1989

Edited by Katarina Mohar and Gregor Dražil



Založba ZRC



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Ljubljana, 2026

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Cover image: Ivo Šubic, unrealised sketch for the mosaic in the building of the People's Assembly of the People's Republic of Slovenia.
Photo: Andreja Rakovec, ZRC SAZU.

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FREIHEIT
RECHT
FRIEDE

ED AND NANCY KIENHOLZ'S PROPOSAL FOR *THE BERLIN FOUNTAIN* (1981/83): AN IRONIC COMMENTARY ON THE FUNCTION OF ART IN PUBLIC SPACES IN EAST AND WEST BERLIN DURING THE COLD WAR

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Even the unrealised concept of a public artwork can be highly significant – and thus must be interpreted in its site-specific context, historical framework, and political environment. The example discussed below – a little-known unrealised sculpture whose model was displayed at an exhibition at Technical University of Berlin (*Technische Universität Berlin*) in West Berlin in 1983 – is particularly revealing when viewed in the context of the Cold War. During this time, two competing political systems vied for supremacy in a divided city, each of them cultivating its distinct notions of society, community, and art. Ed and Nancy Kienholz's proposal for a fountain in West Berlin¹ can be described as site-specific insofar as it is defined in terms of its intended placement, urban integration, and sculptural reference system [Figure 1].²

Below, I first reconstruct the urban, social, political, and aesthetic contexts for today's readers; these were self-evident to the local politicians that decided to prevent the realisation of the Kienholzes' sculpture in the early 1980s. Since the 1990s, the term "community-based art" has been used in the context of New Genre Public Art (NGPA)³ to describe participatory projects that aim to achieve social and integrative action.⁴ However, I argue that traditional object-like sculptures in public space also serve as occasions for communication and action – and, not least, as identification factors for social and political communities. It is therefore necessary to clarify which recipients – or, more precisely, which type of *community* – the Kienholzes targeted with their proposal. Notwithstanding a small number of essays on the topic in German, Ed and Nancy Kienholz's proposal has not yet been systematically examined.⁵ My contribution therefore primarily relies on the competition reports,⁶ newspaper articles,⁷ and exhibition catalogues of the time, as well as on the artists' own statements.

In the early 1960s, Ed Kienholz, born in Fairfield, Washington, in 1927, startled the art world with his environmental installation (or "tableau")



Figure 1. Ed and Nancy Kienholz, *The Berlin Fountain*, 1983. Illustration: Gerd Neuhaus. Aerial photograph: Berliner Morgenpost. Source: University Archive, Technical University of Berlin.

ROXYS (1961), which reconstructed a Las Vegas brothel from the 1940s. The piece established him as an uncompromising and socially critical artist in both the United States and Western Europe.⁸ Kienholz's environmental installations, consisting of assembled pieces of painted furniture, dolls, and industrially produced objects bearing signs of wear and tear that were collected from flea markets, are reminiscent of theatre stages and film sets. These "tableaux" were exhibited in Western Europe as neo-Dadaist "anti-art" and were shown at important venues such as *documenta 4* (1968) and *documenta 5* (1972) in Kassel. Such classifications based strictly on art styles, however, relativize the shock value of the pieces. It is therefore important to emphasize that this self-taught artist – who, prior to his artistic career, had earned his living as a vacuum cleaner salesman, car dealer, band manager, and healthcare assistant – produced a distinctive and implacable form of West Coast American art.⁹ He gained recognition within this field for his involvement with the Art of Assemblage¹⁰ or Junk Culture.¹¹ Through his work, Kienholz relentlessly denounced the abysses of Western societies, such as sexism, racial

Figure 2. Squatters in
Kreuzberg, West Berlin,
1981.
Photo: Tom Ordelman.



discrimination, militarism, exploitation, excessive resource consumption, and media dependency.¹² Because of the radical and highly political content of his work, he was accused – by the critic Barbara Rose, among others¹³ – of adopting a journalistic approach and thus merely visually *reproducing* grievances instead of evoking positive counter-images.

In August 1973, Ed Kienholz – already an internationally recognized artist at the time – accepted an invitation from the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) to spend twelve months in West Berlin. Upon moving there in September 1973 together with the photographer Nancy Reddin Kienholz, whom he had married a year earlier, he had a clearly defined plan: during his scholarship, he intended to create a tableau based on a concept he had conceived a decade earlier, *THE ART SHOW*. It would take four years, however, before Ed and Nancy Kienholz were able to carry out this project together.¹⁴ Once in West Berlin, the Kienholzes were fascinated by the enclave, where border fortifications, tangles of barbed wire, warning signs, systems of self-protection, watchtowers, and barricaded subway “ghost stations” – in which armed East German police officers patrolled in empty underground spaces – were everyday occurrences. West Berlin offered freedom beyond the pressure of economic exploitation, ensuring the creative scene a relatively carefree niche existence. A certain culture of conflict was more pronounced here. When the media reported on the politicized student body and the escalating conflicts between the extra-parliamentary opposition and the state authorities from

the mid-1960s onward, West Berlin was at the forefront. It was here that universities were among the loudest in calling for a reappraisal of Nazism, questioning the capitalist economic model, and demanding solidarity with Third World countries. Their legacy was then taken up by alternative movements with their self-governing institutions and broad resistance to clear-cutting redevelopment and land speculation. The women's movement and the gay and lesbian scene were also highly visible, which offered opportunities for self-confident development. Many of the emancipatory and participatory projects were pilot projects that spread throughout West Germany and contributed to social change throughout it [Figure 2].

In 1997 Jörn Merkert – director of the Berlin Gallery (*Berlinische Galerie*) from 1987 to 2010, where Kienholz's estate is located – recalls a remark made by Ed Kienholz. In his early days in West Berlin, Kienholz realised that the most frightening aspect about Los Angeles was that it gave one the impression that it had “no past nor future – only an eternal, dizzying present.”¹⁵ Berlin, on the other hand, was the exact opposite: its peculiarity lay in “the presence of its overpowering past.” Few cities on earth, Merkert observes, have had such a physically palpable, constricting, and paralyzing sense of how profoundly the past defines the present; the Germans' attempts at suppressing this feeling of numbness often only increased it. Thus, the city's existence as a “consequence of the past” reflected the “immured status quo of the divided world.”¹⁶ Elsewhere in the same catalogue, Merkert aptly describes this historical place as “a juxtaposition of East and West Berlin as a showcase of the two world systems . . . , as a confrontation of thesis and antithesis, immovably awaiting the solution of synthesis, . . . as a violent, embedded collage.”¹⁷

Such contradictions aligned with Ed Kienholz's manner of thinking and working, and it is in light of these considerations that I examine the project the Kienholzes began developing in 1981 for Ernst Reuter Square (*Ernst-Reuter-Platz*) in West Berlin. The Kienholzes proposed setting up a carwash thirty meters long in the centre of Ernst Reuter Square, which would operate day and night, brushing and spraying a white Mercedes – a world-famous status symbol of West German economic performance – until the car disintegrated to scrap. Significantly, it was during this time, too, that Ed and Nancy Kienholz's work began to bear both of their names, marking the official beginning of their collaborative practice. In 1983, the artists exhibited their model in the foyer of Technical University of Berlin; their proposal was one of the three winners of the competition for participatory projects. As documented by jury member Karl Ruhrberg, it took two years to persuade the West Berlin administration to allocate public

Zum Vorlauf

Dieser Präsentation waren Jahre vorausgegangen. So mußten z. B. Verwaltungen für die Idee der „Partizipationsprojekte“ gewonnen werden. Danach sollen die öffentlichen Gelder an der TUB nur noch solchen Kunstobjekten zugeführt werden, die einen engen Bezug zur Technik und zum Standort TUB haben. Zu dem ersten Wettbewerb dieser Art lud die TUB 18 Künstler — unter ihnen Gianni Colombo, Rebecca Horn, Edward Kienholz, Bernhard Leitner, Rudolf Valenta — ein. Unter Vorsitz von Otto Pieni, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, und Mitarbeit des Kulturbefauftragten des TUB-Präsidenten, Kanzler Michael Hobich, wählte die Jury die Vorschläge von Colombo, Kienholz und Leitner aus und empfahl sie zur Realisierung. Welche Kraft der Aussage in „The Berlin Fountain“ steht, läßt bereits die knappe Kienholz'sche Einführung erkennen. Was Kienholz macht und will und warum das Projekt verwirklicht werden soll, beschreibt anschließend Professor Karl Ruhrberg, Museum Ludwig Köln.

Kienholz:

„Mit diesem Werk soll nicht Mercedes Benz lächerlich gemacht werden, sondern ganz im Gegenteil, ich glaube, daß Deutschland heutzutage in der Massenproduktion die besten Automobile herstellt. Der Wagen soll lediglich als Beispiel der technischen Entwicklung dienen. Dieselbe Technologie, die solche exzellenten Autos hervorbringt, produziert jedoch auch Überfluß, Automation, Abfall, sozialzerstörerische Arbeit, Frustration, und die Liste nimmt kein Ende. Viele derjenigen Studenten, die in unseren großartigen westlichen Zivilisationen vom Kindergarten bis zur Universität ausgehildet wurden, finden keinen Arbeitsplatz. Einige Roboter und Computer verrichten bereits die Arbeit schneller und besser. Die Zeit wird ihnen lang, und die Sinnlosigkeit des Lebens ist niederdrückend. Ich sehe in der Stupidität eines Autos, das sich endlos hin- und herbewegt und von innen heraus verrottet, einen Ausdruck dieser Sinnlosigkeit.“

Eine Einführung von Professor Karl Ruhrberg

Die Auslober des Wettbewerbs „Kunst am



Präsident und Kanzler der TUB hatten gerufen und alle, alle kamen. Hier: B., H., v. d. Lancken, E. Kienholz, N. Kienholz, M. Robich, G. Kupsch. Rechte Spalte oben: Raue, Sawade, Jones. Mitte: Wittwe, Lakatos, Vetter. Unten: Biekey, Sedgley. Fotos: Seite 24: Beyermann, Seite 25: Lowmatsch

Bau — Technische Universität“ haben es sich nicht leicht gemacht, indem sie mit der Forderung nach „Partizipationsprojekten“ konventionelle Lösungsvorschläge in der üblichen Kunst-am-Bau-Routine von vornherein ausschlossen und sich stattdessen dem Risiko aussetzten, die Integration von bildender Kunst in den weiten Bereich einer technischen Hochschule nicht nur visuell sondern auch durch einen permanenten Kontakt mit den Lehrenden und Lernenden, durch Teilnahme am künstlerischen Prozeß und seiner Realisierung zu verlangen, die Konzipierung von Ideen und deren Ausführung nachprüfbar und erlebbar zu machen, somit „Langfristig ein kontinuierliches Kulturleben an der TU Berlin einzuleiten.“

Jeder, der als Juror bei solchen oder vergleichbaren Projekten mit so hohem Ziel je tätig war, weiß, wie groß, ja unüberbrückbar die Distanz zwischen Anspruch und Wirklichkeit am Ende sein kann. Als ehemaliger Chef des Berliner Kunstlerprogramms muß ich die letzte Konsequenz lebhaft begrüßen, daß nämlich die Praisträger in das Berliner Kunstleben einbezogen werden und engen Kontakt zu den in Berlin lebenden und arbeitenden Kollegen finden sollen. So ist, wenn das Werk gelingt, die Gefahr ausgeschaltet, daß aus einem einmaligen Vorgang am Ende doch nur wieder eine folgenlose Episode wird und Anekdote bleibt, was als Zukunftsprojektion gedacht war.



Figure 3. Model for Ed and Nancy Kienholz's *The Berlin Fountain* on display at Technical University of Berlin, 1982. Source: TU-Journal 3/4 (1983).

funds for such a high-risk project.¹⁸ The artists' proposal for Ernst Reuter Square was called *The Berlin Fountain* – a succinct and neutral-sounding title, which can be read as the designation of a conventional square design, but also, significantly, as a reference to Marcel Duchamp's famous readymade *Fountain* (1917) [Figure 3].

The importance of urban strategic planning

Although the car wash may, at first, appear to be a matter of mere amusement, the concept assumes much greater significance when viewed from a political and urban planning perspective. For a better understanding, it is necessary to first visualize the urban strategic planning: Ernst Reuter Square was once a crossroads in Charlottenburg, and therefore located in West Berlin. Planned as a counterpart to Strausberg Square (*Strausberger Platz*) in East Berlin – the crowning glory of a metropolitan boulevard leading eastward from the historic city centre – Ernst Reuter Square played an important role during the Cold War. After the establishment of East Germany in 1949, Big Frankfurt Street (*Große Frankfurter Straße*) and Frankfurt Avenue (*Frankfurter Allee*) in East Berlin were renamed Stalin Avenue (*Stalinallee*) on the occasion of Joseph Stalin's seventieth birthday. As part of the Berlin National Reconstruction Program, two solitary pergola residential housing blocks, designed by Ludmilla Herzenstein and Hans Scharoun, were erected there. The tradition of the Weimar Republic was consciously followed – not only in the architectural design, but also in the choice of two progressive architects that were familiar with the construction of housing estates in the 1920s. In 1951, the architectural and urban planning concept underwent a change: the East German leadership decided to rebuild Stalin Avenue as “Germany's first socialist avenue,” modelled on Soviet monumental architecture. A rigorous separation of work and residential functions, propagated in the West as a sign of modernity, was rejected in favour of a “city crown” – a dominant city centre [Figure 4].

As a result, a boulevard ninety meters wide and 2.3 km long was built following the plans of Hermann Henselmann, whose “workers' palaces” were intended to programmatically herald the impending “golden age” of communism. The façades of the steel-frame constructions were decorated with ceramic tiles, prompting West Berliners at the height of the Cold War to deride the buildings as “Stalinist confectionery style.” Wide, tree-lined sidewalks invited pedestrians to take a stroll. Restaurants such as *Haus Budapest* and *Café Moskau* tempted people with culinary delights. The highlight of the communist flagship project was Strausberg Square. At the edge of the square stood a statue of Stalin nearly five meters tall, mounted on a three-meter pedestal. This site was for a period a place of Stalin worship, especially when the dictator died in March 1953 [Figure 5].

The first construction phase of Stalin Avenue was completed in 1955. In response to this communist flagship project in East Berlin, an urban planning competition was held in Berlin-Charlottenburg, a part of the city in West Berlin that had been known as the New West (*Neuer Westen*) since the



*Figure 4. Strausberger Platz, Stalinallee, East Berlin, ca. 1955.
Postcard published by Volkskunstverlag Reichenbach.*



*Figure 5. Statue of Stalin on Stalinallee, East Berlin, ca. 1955.
Postcard published by Volkskunstverlag Reichenbach.*

Figure 6. Festive decorations along the East–West Axis at night on the National Day of the German People, 1 May 1939. Retouched photograph. Postcard published by König's Postcards, Berlin.



1920s. The site, once known as the Knee (*Knie*) due to its bend in the road, had been completely destroyed during the Second World War, but it was by no means a blank slate. Located at the junction between Berlin City Palace and Charlottenburg Palace since the early eighteenth century, the square was part of the East–West Axis (*Ost–West-Achse*) during the Nazi era and thus central to Albert Speer's planned reorganisation of Berlin into the "world capital of Germania". Under Nazism, plans were made for military parades to march along this four-lane boulevard fifty meters wide [Figure 6].

According to Speer's plans, the perimeter development of the main street would have looked similar to today's Ernst Reuter Building (*Ernst Reuter Haus*, 1938–1942), a gigantic, neoclassical, three-winged building that now houses the Berlin Senate Library. In the 1950s, the plans of West Berlin adhered to Albert Speer's idea of a roundabout, but, instead of the monumental buildings of the Nazi era, they envisioned a solitary office tower development that was meant as a reference to American architecture [Figure 7]. The plans were drawn up by the German architect Bernhard Hermkes, who had just been appointed to Technical College Charlottenburg (*Technische Hochschule Charlottenburg*), later renamed Technical University of Berlin. The architecture historian Harald Bodenschatz aptly interprets Hermkes's first model as a reaction to the urban planning of East Berlin:

First, we see a proper roundabout surrounding a huge central island, on which a large outdoor fountain was planned.

Figure 7.
Ernst-Reuter-Platz,
West Berlin, ca. 1964.
Postcard, publisher
unknown.



... In terms of the central island, the new square differed little from *Strausberger Platz* . . . The grouping of the buildings, however, was decisive. Whereas a closed square development in traditional architectural language was created in East Berlin, Bernhard Hermkes favoured a composition of solitary buildings in modern architectural language, which were to be connected by bridges and supplemented by an office tower. All the buildings, however, reference the large *Ost-West-Achse* because they are parallel to or at right angles from it. The difference in height was also striking: the office block dominated the composition, . . . whereas all the other buildings not directly on the square were significantly lower. The composition was therefore centralized and hierarchical.¹⁹

The social situation

The social situation of Ernst Reuter Square is likewise significant. In the 1950s and 1960s, a car-friendly roundabout was created, with five main roads intersecting with it. Vehicle traffic has since had to go around a green central island that features a large fountain in its middle. The tram – the once-progressive means of transportation in the Weimar Republic – was pushed out of the cityscape. Instead, public transportation was provided by an underground rail system, and pedestrians were thus rel-

egated to the subways – or were otherwise left to wait for better times, at the no fewer than sixty-seven traffic lights installed around the square. The car was undoubtedly the only winner here. Notably, there are no residents in this area: until 1968, office and administrative buildings for electronics and IT industries were erected on the lots that the city administration had acquired from various private owners through expropriation proceedings. Gradually, tall steel or steel-frame constructions such as the Telefunken, AEG, Osram, or IBM buildings, as well as a number of unconnected institutes of Technical University of Berlin, were built. The cubature of the buildings is based on geometric forms, the façades are gridded, and the large expanses of glass promise transparency. Despite such unifying elements, one cannot overlook the fact that Ernst Reuter Square is surrounded by free-standing buildings. Constructed on the historic site of the technical university, which was founded in the nineteenth century, these free-standing buildings of the twentieth century can be understood as a structural expression of a social order based on private property and self-interest. In contrast, the connected communist residential and commercial buildings on Strausberg Square could be interpreted as a closed social body. Two opposing economic models are thus visibly competing in Berlin's urban space.

Social spaces such as shops, cafés, and other attractive sites where city dwellers could spend their time are nowhere to be found on Ernst Reuter Square. The West Berlin Senate administration reserved the public space solely for industrial, administrative, and educational institutions. However, the inhospitality of the square was by no means criticized in the 1960s. On the contrary, Bodenschatz remarks that “the square was the subject of effusive praise and massive propaganda from the West Berlin Senate building administration well into the 1960s.” It “was hailed as the ‘most modern square in Germany’, or as the ‘most beautiful square’ in Berlin. Its fountains have been compared to the Trevi Fountain.”²⁰ The ideal perspective over Ernst Reuter Square – as one can see in the coloured photographs of the time – is the bird's eye view: necessarily from above, and from a safe distance. The pedestrian's ground-level perspective does not correspond to the urban planning concept. Instead, the preferred, privileged view is the one seen from the window – an overview of the exemplary, tidy new city below, which the heads of the administration could enjoy from the upper stories of the glass towers.²¹

Political events of the Cold War

Ernst Reuter Square and Strausberg Square must also be seen in the context of the political events of the Cold War. Strausberg Square was the nucleus of a popular uprising in East Germany that involved around one million people in seven hundred towns and communities. The uprising of 17 June 1953 began the evening before, at a construction site on Stalin Avenue. The agreed-upon increase in standards – namely, the state-mandated increase in labour output for the same wages – had provoked work stoppages. As a result, demands were made for better living and working conditions, as well as for free elections. Heiner Müller's play *Der Lohndrucker* (The Scab), which premiered in Leipzig in 1958, refers to these events. The occupying Soviet Union finally put a violent end to the uprising with tanks and army troops. Fifty insurgents were killed and some fifteen thousand East German citizens imprisoned. Just five days after the bloody suppression of the East German uprising, Charlottenburg Highway (*Charlottenburger Chaussee*), the former East-West Axis of the Nazi era, was renamed 17 June Street (*Straße des 17. Juni*). This was a warning, but also a triumphant gesture: the victory of capitalism, which had fuelled the "economic miracle" in West Germany, now seemed secure, in view of the shortage of goods and the willingness of East German citizens to defend themselves against their own communist government and against the Soviets as an occupying power.

A few months later, on 1 October 1953 – two days after the death of the former city councillor and West Berlin mayor Ernst Reuter – the former Kneip was named after the politician. Reuter had been a member of the Social Democratic Party of Germany since 1912 and the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) since 1919, and the latter's general secretary since 1921. Imprisoned in a concentration camp during the Nazi era and forced to flee to Turkey, Reuter was a blameless anti-fascist – by no means a norm in postwar West Germany. During the Berlin Blockade – during the almost twelve months, from June 1948 to May 1949, when the inhabitants of West Berlin, blockaded by the Soviets to starve, could only be supplied with food airlifted in – Ernst Reuter made a famous speech about perseverance. On 9 September 1948, at a rally of three hundred thousand people standing in front of the shattered Reichstag building, Reuter called on the world not to abandon the western part of Berlin, which was cut off by the Soviet blockade: "If hundreds of thousands of Berliners stand up here today, we know that the whole world will see this Berlin. ... Behind these political acts stands the will of free people that have recognized that a bulwark, an outpost of freedom, has been erected here, in this city, which no one can abandon with impunity."²² Ernst Reuter had thus become Stalin's victorious adversary and a

symbol of Western freedom. The idea of erecting a gigantic memorial commemorating the victims of 17 June – the fighters for freedom – on Ernst Reuter Square was discussed as early as 1953.²³ At the beginning of 1954, a pylon six meters high with a gas flame burning in a bowl was erected on Ernst Reuter Square as part of a Prisoners of War Week. This “flame of freedom” was seen as a temporary memorial to Ernst Reuter, who, during his time in office, had called on Berliners to place candles in their windows on Christmas Eve as a sign of hope in memory of the German prisoners of war in the Soviet Union. In 1955, the West Berlin building and planning committee convened to discuss the prospect of erecting an Ernst Reuter memorial in the centre of the square bearing the politician’s name.²⁴ In the meantime, the regional associations of German expellees had already received an iron sacrificial bowl as a memorial to the victims of flight and expulsion on Theodor Heuss Square (*Theodor-Heuss-Platz*), also located on East–West Axis – the former Imperial Chancellor Square (*Reichskanzlerplatz*), which was called Adolf Hitler Square (*Adolf-Hitler-Platz*) from 1933 to 1945 [Figure 8].

The aesthetic premises of the sculptures in East and West Berlin

For Ernst Reuter Square, the aim was to retain the symbolism of the flame, but not to link it to a specific historical event or group of victims, instead establishing it as a representation of the desire for freedom and democracy for all Berliners. In December 1960, West Berlin’s senator for construction announced that the artist Bernhard Heiliger had been commissioned to design a permanent memorial for Ernst Reuter. It was no longer to be located in the centre of the square – where a fountain designed by Bernhard Hermkes and Werner Düttmann had been installed – but in front of the planned Architecture Institute of Technical University of Berlin, on the northeast corner of Ernst Reuter Square. Heiliger, who had already created a bust of Ernst Reuter, was favoured by Reuter’s widow and also the politicians. Heiliger’s first design still had a figurative element. A bust of Reuter was to be erected next to a monolithic pillar nine meters high. This first construction, described by the press as a “pillar of fire”, was intended to symbolize the city’s desire for freedom.

The historical situation, however, changed fundamentally: on Sunday, 13 August 1961, the construction of the Berlin Wall – which would separate East and West Berlin for twenty-eight years – commenced. The connecting lines between Strausberg Square and Ernst Reuter Square were cut. This would likewise mark the end of the cult of personality in the Soviet

Figure 8. Eternal Flame: Memorial to the Victims of Flight and Expulsion, stone ashlar, iron sacrificial bowl, and gas flame, 1955. Erected on the initiative of the Landsmannschaften der deutschen Heimatvertriebenen at Reichskanzlerplatz, formerly Adolf-Hitler-Platz and renamed Theodor-Heuss-Platz in 1963, West Berlin, 1985. Photo: Annette Tietenberg.



Union – and thus also in East Germany. On the night of 14 November 1961, soldiers of the East German National People's Army arrived and toppled the Stalin monument from its pedestal with a bulldozer. The statue was transported on a flatbed truck to a construction company, where it was crushed; only a few pieces, including an ear, were left. By the time the residents went to work on Monday morning, not only had the monument disappeared, but all the street signs had been replaced as well: the western section of Stalin Avenue was now called Karl Marx Avenue (*Karl-Marx-Allee*), and the eastern section Frankfurt Avenue.

In this context, Bernhard Heiliger made numerous changes to his original design. He finally decided on the symbol of a blazing flame fused with a pair of extended wings. According to contemporaries, the sculpture “not only echoed the idea of a ‘flame of freedom’ and the peace symbol of the dove, but also manifested the city’s defiant self-confidence”.²⁵ This symbolism reaffirmed the relationship between abstraction in art and political freedom – a concept previously invoked by the *documenta*. The plaster model was cut up in the studio, and the pieces were transported to the Noack bronze foundry. The bronze elements were welded together on 11 September 1963, and then the sculpture was lifted onto a low loader and anchored to the ground with iron struts. The result was the largest abstract bronze sculpture in West Germany to date. At a height of seven meters, the abstract *Die Flamme* (Flame) was on a par with the figurative Stalin statue in East Berlin – but unlike the latter, *Die Flamme* stood at



Figure 9. Bernhard Heiliger, *Die Flamme* (Flame), bronze, 1962–1963, 700 × 500 × 450 cm.
 Photo: Lothar Wolleh. © Lothar Wolleh Estate, 2025.

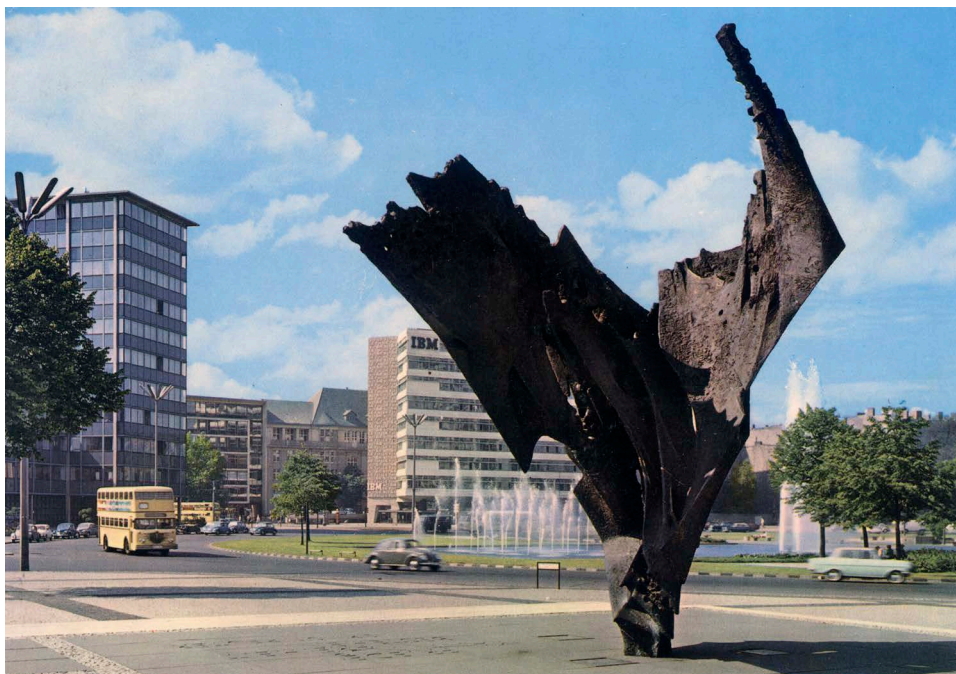


Figure 10. Bernhard Heiliger, *Die Flamme* (Flame), bronze, 1962–1963, 700 × 500 × 450 cm.
 Postcard published by Hans Andres Edition, Berlin, 1964.

ground level, albeit on a staircase. It was not enthroned on a pedestal, but shared its position with the viewers – a sign, supposedly, of a democratic understanding of art [Figure 9].

Die Flamme was erected to commemorate the tenth anniversary of Ernst Reuter's death under considerable time constraints, in the middle of a construction site where work was simultaneously being carried out at the Architecture Institute of Technical University of Berlin. In an evening ceremony on 28 September 1963, it was unveiled by Mayor Willy Brandt – who would later serve as federal chancellor – with the following words: "The upward movement of this sculpture may be a symbol of . . . the perpetual struggle for human freedom."²⁶ The ceremony was over "when the spotlights embedded in the ground illuminated the sculpture for the first time – and thus, in a sense, set it alight."²⁷ However, that was not the end of the light show. According to newspaper reports from 1963, the light of the flame was symbolically carried on by "the youth". These were students that carried five hundred torches toward the Free University of Berlin during the nighttime ceremony. The forecourt of the Free University of Berlin was also illuminated by two columns of flame. A memorial service for Ernst Reuter was held there. The message was that the Free University of Berlin would continue to serve as a torch of the spirit, in keeping with Ernst Reuter's legacy. The question was not asked whether the fascination with the play of light of an eternal flame might be connected to Albert Speer's Dome of Light and the torchlight processions of the Nazi era. The fact that Bernhard Heiliger had studied under the sculptor Arno Breker, one of the most important artists of Nazi Germany, that he had worked in Breker's sculpture studios during the Second World War, or that he had used Breker's large sculpture studio in Berlin-Dahlem since February 1949, did nothing to diminish the enthusiasm that the public commissioners showed for his abstract "eternal flame". Later, an inscription was carved into the floor slabs, which read: "Peace can only exist in freedom" [Figure 10].

The competition

In the early 1980s, Ed and Nancy Kienholz reacted with bitter irony and biting humour to the Cold War pathos of freedom and the collective repression of guilt in the cheerful intoxication of the West German economic miracle. Their proposal, *The Berlin Fountain*, was designed to interrupt the former East–West Axis with a thirty-meter-long carwash located in the middle of a large oval outdoor fountain on the central island of Ernst Reuter Square. A transparent plexiglass pavilion with fountains spraying from



Figure 11. Ed and Nancy Kienholz, The Berlin Fountain, 1983. Illustration: Gerd Neuhaus. Aerial photograph: Berliner Morgenpost. Source: University Archive, Technical University of Berlin.

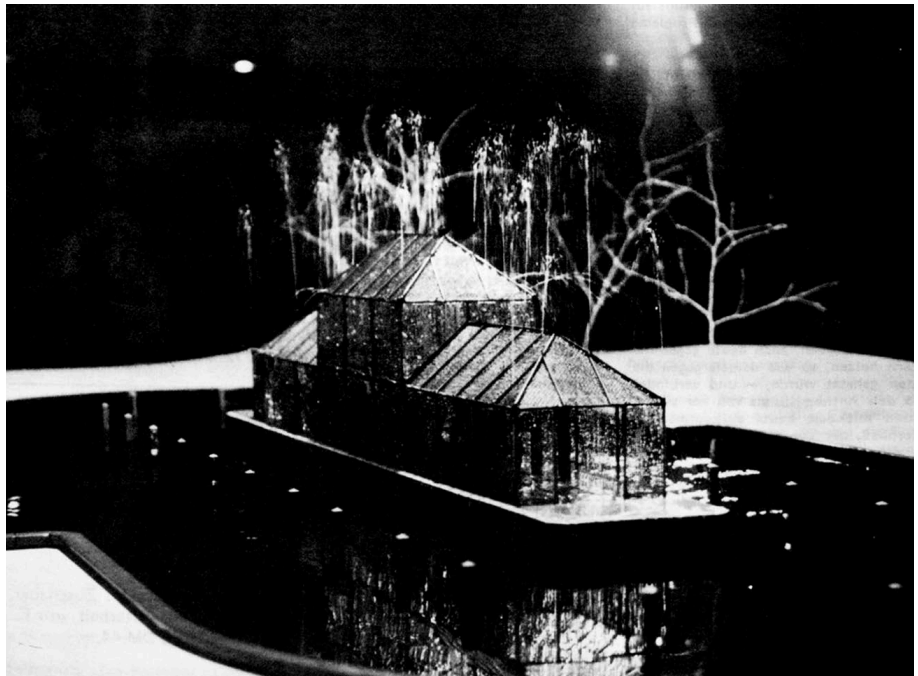
the roof would cover the carwash. Just like a glass-protected work of art in an exhibition, the inaccessible carwash – a ready-made – would have been admired from afar. A pristine white Mercedes inside the carwash – likewise a readymade, although with its engine removed – was to be automatically pulled back and forth. The car would have been continuously processed by rotating brushes until nothing was left of it but a pile of scrap metal, later to be replaced by a

new vehicle. This ironic representation of a fountain – which symbolized the unrestrained consumption of resources under capitalism – was also intended to be spectacularly illuminated at night. As befits a fountain in a public space, spotlights would have bathed the carwash in coloured light from below in the dark [Figure 11]. Ed Kienholz often used cars in connection with his environments. He was aware of how closely cars were linked to the exploitation of resources and environmentally damaging oil production, but also to sexual experiences, violent fantasies, and the myth of unlimited freedom.²⁸

A jury chaired by the artist Otto Piene selected the project in a public competition organised by Technical University of Berlin and proposed it for completion.²⁹ The jury member Karl Ruhrberg, the director of the Ludwig Museum and a close friend of Ed Kienholz, explained the result of the competition in more abstract aesthetic and political terms:

The shock arises from “alienation” – to borrow Bertolt Brecht’s term – the seemingly mundane, which we constantly deal with and therefore barely notice, which we repress and no longer give any thought to, until it is brought back into our consciousness in an irritating, painful way. In this case, this here is a very ordinary carwash, placed at a traffic junction. The water fountains are integrated as part of the whole, bubbling out of artificial bird beaks, reflected in black water. Inside the glass case, a car displayed as a moving sculpture – a technical masterpiece of its kind, a status symbol and a symbol of road safety, illuminated by floating traffic lights un-

Figure 12. Ed and Nancy Kienholz, model for *The Berlin Fountain*, 1983. Source: *TU-Journal* 3/4 (1983).



der the flag of the United States ... Linked with the water's blackness ... a colourful theatre play will emerge – a piece not of dramatic, but of epic theatre, with no beginning or end: a Perpetuum Mobile.³⁰

Even though the Berlin branch of Mercedes refused to cooperate, the proposal found many supporters in the 1980s. Daimler boss Edzard Reuter – Ernst Reuter's son – signalled his approval. The Friends of the National Gallery in West Berlin collected donations totalling DM 250,000 to cover the expected additional costs.³¹ The provocative proposal was never officially rejected, but neither was it granted a building permit. Without a permit, however, the proposal could not be carried out. After all, *The Berlin Fountain* was not to be installed on the university campus, but in a prestigious public space in West Berlin – which naturally required the approval of the construction, urban planning, and district authorities.³² There has been much speculation about the reasons why *The Berlin Fountain* was not carried out. Was it because the art critics were not keen on realizing the design? "Why all this?" asked the theatre critic Reinhard Beuth in the daily newspaper *Die Welt* on 7 July 1983. Rushing to answer his own rhetorical question, he added: "Well, Kienholz, a great allegorist, sees the 'stupidity' of the car moving back and forth and rotting as an expression of the 'senselessness' of a 'technology' that produces 'abundance, automation, waste, socially destructive work, frustration'"³³ [Figure 12].

Ten years later, the newspaper *taz* suspected, as Bernd Nicolai had previously done,³⁴ that it was the city councillor for construction in Charlottenburg and the senator for the interior of Berlin that had forbidden the creation of *The Berlin Fountain* in 1985.³⁵ Did the local politicians understand the “divergence between technical perfection and moral underdevelopment”³⁶ better than the art critics? Did they realise that Ed and Nancy Kienholz intended to denounce the West Germans’ attempt, after 1945, to cleanse themselves of their historical guilt – the Holocaust – and to instead define themselves by a growing economy? Were they aware that Ed and Nancy Kienholz wished to draw attention to the fact that there can be no new beginning on the former East–West Axis, where Speer’s streetlamps still stand? Or that the Kienholzes wished to ask a painful question: “For whom does *Die Flamme* on Ernst Reuter Square actually burn today?” For Ernst Reuter, the Social Democrat? For the former torchbearers of Nazism? Or for the freedom of West Germans, which always comes at the expense of dissenters or the exploited? After all, in the 1980s, the art scene – for example, in Hans Haacke’s installation for *documenta 8* – loudly criticized the fact that Mercedes Benz supported apartheid in South Africa and had risen to become the largest arms manufacturer in West Germany.

My research has shown that the competition had a longer history. As early as 1967, when demonstrators in West Berlin began to question hierarchies and oppose the continuation of Nazi traditions – whether in terms of personnel, structures, or urban planning – a competition was announced for a new building for Technical University of Berlin on 17 June Street: an institute building for mathematics was to be constructed. The runners-up, Georg Kohlmaier and Barna von Sartory, were ultimately awarded the construction contract. However, planning did not begin until 1973. Kohlmaier and von Sartory’s design is an early example of solar architecture and ecological construction. The mathematics building was conceived as a “sun trap” with maximum light incidence based on a greenhouse principle, in which daylight is used as a heat source and heating sources can be switched on as needed. Triple glazing was used for the first time in an office building for the transparent façades. A light protection system equipped with sun guards also reacts sensitively to sunshine. The institute was scheduled for completion in 1981, but it was delayed by three years. According to my research, the Technical University of Berlin competition, which produced three winners – Gianni Colombo, Bernhard Leitner, and Ed and Nancy Kienholz – was for an art-in-architecture project for this very mathematics building that was under construction. In

line with the ecological standards of the new building and the accompanying redefinition of relations between people and the environment in the 1970s, the competition was announced with a focus on “participatory projects”. In 1983, the journal of Technical University of Berlin, *TU-Journal*, offered an idea of how novel this was at the time. It states: “For example, administrations had to be won over to the idea of ‘participatory projects’. According to this, public funds at Technical University of Berlin should only be allocated to art projects that have a connection to technology and the Technical University of Berlin location.” In the same issue, Karl Ruhrberg, a member of the jury that vehemently advocated for the installation of *The Berlin Fountain*, pointed out in his introduction that Technical University of Berlin, “through permanent contact with teachers and students, through participation in the artistic process and its realisation”, demanded “that the conception of ideas and their execution be verifiable and tangible”.³⁷ For the jury, this meant that it was first necessary to solve a “terminological-definitional problem”. Initially, they addressed the difficult question of “What is participation?”

Even though the jury did everything in its power to prioritize the design by Ed and Nancy Kienholz among the three winners, another project was ultimately carried out: Bernhard Leitner’s *TON-RAUM* (Sound Room). The permanent sound installation was set up in 1984 in the interior of the main building of Technical University of Berlin – and not in the Mathematics Institute. Bernhard Leitner fitted a passageway, connected to three corridors, with sound-absorbing cladding in which twenty-four broadband and eighteen high-frequency loudspeakers are embedded, invisible to the building’s users, which project sounds into the room. The administrations of the Berlin Senate and Technical University of Berlin thus opted for a media extension of art, enclosed within the walls of the university.

Ed and Nancy Kienholz’s *The Berlin Fountain*, on the other hand, would have made visible the fact that public spaces are venues for social conflicts. They owed their understanding of technology to the California counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s – and thus “the unique alliance between hippies and cyberneticists, nature romantics and technology worshippers, between psychedelia and computer culture, who found common ground in their rejection of hierarchical power structures and authoritarian institutions and in their search for utopian outlaw areas,” as Anselm Franke wrote in 2013 in the catalogue for the exhibition *The Whole Earth* at the HKW.³⁸ It is not difficult to guess where this attitude of California counterculture found resonance in West Berlin. Even though Ed and Nancy Kienholz’s studio was located at Meineke Street (*Meinek-*

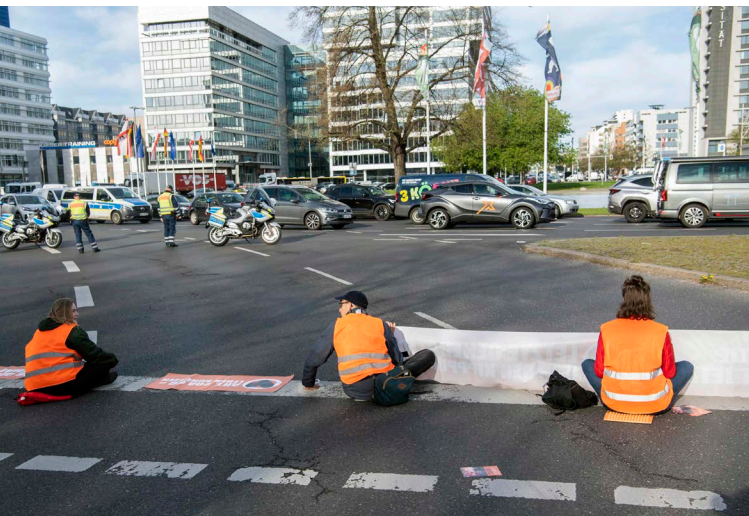


Figure 13. Climate protest at Ernst-Reuter-Platz: activists from the Last Generation group block an exit, 24 April 2023. Photo: picture alliance/dpa / Paul Zinken.



Figure 14. Entrance to the Ernst-Reuter-Platz U-Bahn station, 2012. Photo: Tom Ordelman.

estraße) 6 in Charlottenburg, not far from Ernst Reuter Square, they were likely in contact with the squatter scene protesting the demolition of large old neighbourhoods in Schöneberg and Kreuzberg. With a total of over two hundred squatted houses and an estimated five to six thousand participants in the first half of the 1980s, West Berlin was a stronghold of the squatter scene. Squatters that set about renovating dilapidated houses at their own initiative, citizens' initiatives, and architects that had been meeting since 1979 to prepare for the International Building Exhibition (IBA) put pressure on the West Berlin Senate and actually succeeded in getting it to abandon the so-called area redevelopment plan.³⁹ I assume that self-help projects and alternative lifestyles in Kreuzberg in the early 1980s were tolerated by the West Berlin Senate to integrate young punks and dropouts into the labour market and channel the protest potential of squatting. In Charlottenburg, however, and especially at Ernst Reuter Square, West Berlin's prestige project, anarchic protests against the car-friendly city were undesirable.

Two years after the award, Ed and Nancy Kienholz, who had never created a work for a public space before, abandoned the project as part of a performance. They demonstratively sank their model into the fountain on the central island of Ernst Reuter Square.⁴⁰ Ed Kienholz later recalled: "We won a competition for a fountain on Ernst Reuter Square in Berlin ... I

am content to say that *The Berlin Fountain* was never realised and the DM 600,000 approved for the project disappeared down some bureaucratic hole.”⁴¹ Whimsical as it is, *The Berlin Fountain* had the potential to serve as an effective counter-monument to Bernhard Heiliger’s *Die Flamme*. At the same time, it could have been an antidote to the rivalry between abstract and figurative art during the Cold War. Finally, the piece would have provided a further perspective to the burgeoning critique of the urban planning concept of the car-friendly city at the beginning of the 1980s, which degraded its inhabitants to staffage figures.⁴² Last but not least, it was a design that, in an astonishingly humorous way, raised explosive questions about the limits of growth, the fixation on the car-friendly city, and the extent to which citizens should be involved in urban planning. The Kienholzes’ anarchistic project could have led to an alliance between the squatters and the art scene [Figure 13].

Although *The Berlin Fountain* remained a proposal, I argue that it is important to integrate this design – so typical of the countercultural movements of the 1980s in the United States and West Berlin – into the history of public art. At times, it is precisely unrealised designs that can bring to light conflicts and different perceptions of history and politics. The story of *The Berlin Fountain* shows that democratic procedures in which aesthetic decisions are delegated to a jury are always highly *political* processes – especially regarding the design principles of urban space.⁴³ Only a small number of the drivers, passersby, and partygoers that walk or drive through Ernst Reuter Square every day are likely to be familiar with the square’s design or with its aesthetic, historical, and political reference systems. All they see is an inhospitable roundabout and the entrances to the underground, where they can quickly take refuge [Figure 14]. Although this could be a reason for despair, it could also provide the necessary fuel to efforts to impart knowledge of art history – namely, so that the art *for* the community can one day become the art *of* the community.

Endnotes

- 1 I would especially like to thank Luciana Tamas for reviewing my English text so carefully and competently. I would also like to thank the archivists at Technical University of Berlin, in particular Claudia Schülzky, and the curators at the Berlin Gallery (where Ed Kienholz's estate is located), especially Guido Faßbender, for their kind support in bringing to light some previously unpublished illustrative material from the Kienholzes' project.
- 2 See Nick Kaye, *Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation* (London: Routledge, 2000), 1.
- 3 Suzanne Lacy, ed., *Mapping the Terrain: New Genre Public Art* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1994).
- 4 Such projects have often been criticized for supporting dysfunctional social systems and compensating for citizens' feelings of powerlessness while failing to change the real power relations. See Claire Bishop, *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship* (London: Verso, 2012).
- 5 Bernd Nicolai, "Berliner Brunnen von Begas bis Bonk: Historische Entwicklung in Einzelanalysen," in *Neptuns Reich an der Spree: Berliner Brunnen von Begas bis Bonk (von 1886 bis 1986)*, ed. Elke Messner, Bernd Nicolai, and Wolfgang Schuster (Berlin: Transit, 1986), 83–84; Jörn Merkert, "Eine Berliner Zeitreise oder Ed und Nancy Kienholz in Berlin," in *Kienholz Retrospektive: Edward und Nancy Reddin Kienholz*, ed. Walter Hopps (München: Prestel, 1997), 36–51; Tabea Metzel, "Ed Kienholz und Nancy Reddin Kienholz. The Berlin Fountain 1981," in *Kunst in der Stadt: Skulpturen in Berlin*, ed. Hans Dickel and Uwe Fleckner (Berlin: Nicolai, 2003), 166, 167.
- 6 "The Berlin Fountain: Ein neues Gesicht für den Ernst-Reuter-Platz," *TU-Journal* 3/4 (1983): 24–26.
- 7 Reinhard Beuth, "Langsam rostet der Mercedes vor sich hin: Die Berliner Brunnenphantasien des Edward Kienholz," *Die Welt*, 7 July 1983, 17; Katrin Bettina Müller, "Das Portrait: Ed Kienholz," *taz*, 13 June 1994, <https://taz.de/Ed-Kienholz/!1558228>; Harald Fricke, "Im Tal der Puppen," *taz*, 7 February 1997, <https://taz.de/Im-Tal-der-Puppen/!1415378>.
- 8 See Knut Nievers, "Ed Kienholz und die Aktualität der Kunst," in *Edward Kienholz: Roxys and Other Works*, ed. Ilona Lindenberg (Berlin: Sammlung Reinhard Onnasch, 1982).
- 9 Together with Walter Hopps, Ed Kienholz founded the Ferus Gallery in Los Angeles in 1956, which later established New York Pop Art and the conceptual approaches of CalArts on the West Coast under the influence of Irving Blum. See Kristine McKenna, *The Ferus Gallery: A Place to Begin* (Göttingen: Steidl, 2009).
- 10 This was the title of an exhibition that took place at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 1961.
- 11 See Lawrence Alloway, "Junk Culture," *Architectural Design* 31, no. 3 (1961): 122–123.
- 12 *The exhibition Ed Kienholz: 11+11 Tableaux* (1970/71), curated by Pontus Hulten, toured from Stockholm to Amsterdam, Düsseldorf, Paris, Zurich, and London, cementing Ed Kienholz's reputation.
- 13 Barbara Rose, "New York Letter," *Art International* 7, no. 3 (1963): 65.
- 14 *THE ART SHOW* was finished in 1977. The work thematizes the opening of an art exhibition in a gallery. For the figures, the artist couple modelled nineteen friends and personalities from the art scene of the 1970s. *THE ART SHOW* has been part of the collection of the Berlin Gallery since 1996.
- 15 Merkert, "Eine Berliner Zeitreise," 36. My translation.
- 16 Merkert, "Eine Berliner Zeitreise," 36. My translation.
- 17 Merkert, "Eine Berliner Zeitreise," 37. My translation.
- 18 "The Berlin Fountain," 25.
- 19 Harald Bodenschatz, "Städtebau und Architektur des ERP," *Bauhaus Reuse*, accessed May 14, 2026, https://www.bauhaus-reuse.de/index.php/content/bau_und_architektur_des_erp/. My translation.

- 20 Bodenschatz, "Städtebau und Architektur." My translation.
- 21 As Dagmar Gausmann points out, in the 1950s, architects assumed that in the future the city would be perceived from the perspective of helicopters or civilian air taxis. Dagmar Gausmann, *Der Ernst-Reuter-Platz in Berlin: Die Geschichte eines öffentlichen Raumes der fünfziger Jahre* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 1992), 75.
- 22 Ernst Reuter, speech before the Reichstag, Berlin, 9 September 1948, cited from Berlin.de, "Ernst Reuters Rede am 9. September 1948 vor dem Reichstag," last modified 22 December 2023. <https://www.berlin.de/geschichte/8481767-3689745-ernst-reuters-rede-am-9-september-1948-v.html>. For the archival audio and historical context, see ARD Archivradio, "Ihr Völker der Welt, schaut auf diese Stadt!" – Ernst Reuters Rede vor dem Reichstag," SWR Kultur, last modified 6 December 2024, <https://www.swr.de/swrkultur/wissen/archivradio/voelker-der-welt-schaut-auf-diese-stadt-ernst-reuters-rede-vor-dem-reichstag-102.html>. My translation.
- 23 Gausmann, *Der Ernst-Reuter-Platz*, 47.
- 24 Gausmann, *Der Ernst-Reuter-Platz*, 92.
- 25 Marc Wellmann, *Bernhard Heiliger 1915–1995* (Köln: Wienand, 2005), 164–165. My translation.
- 26 Wellmann, *Bernhard Heiliger*, 165.
- 27 Wellmann, *Bernhard Heiliger*, 165.
- 28 After his death in 1994, Ed Kienholz was buried in his car, a 1940 Packard, at his own request – along with an urn containing the ashes of his dog, a bottle of red wine, and a dollar.
- 29 Even though their friends and supporters did not speak about it openly, they knew that Ed and Nancy Kienholz had been intensively researching the historical layer of Nazism in Berlin. Ed and Nancy Kienholz explored the role played by the media during Nazism in their *Volksempfänger* (people's receiver) series. To this end, they bought radios from the Nazi era at flea markets, which they then incorporated into their assemblages. *Volksempfänger* radios were also scattered around their studio, prompting visitors to recount stories from the war, which Nancy Kienholz recorded and collected.
- 30 "The Berlin Fountain," 27.
- 31 Metzel, "Ed Kienholz und Nancy Reddin Kienholz," 167.
- 32 Metzel, "Ed Kienholz und Nancy Reddin Kienholz," 166.
- 33 Beuth, "Langsam rostet der Mercedes."
- 34 Bernd Nicolai mentions that the city councillor of Charlottenburg, Wolfgang Antes – who was involved in one of West Berlin's largest corruption scandals and was sentenced to five years in prison in 1986 for bribery and accepting benefits in office – rejected the draft. Nicolai, "Berliner Brunnen von Begas bis Bonk," 83.
- 35 Müller, "Das Portrait: Ed Kienholz."
- 36 "The Berlin Fountain," 27.
- 37 "The Berlin Fountain," 26.
- 38 Anselm Franke, "Earthrise und das Verschwinden des Außen," in *The Whole Earth: Kalifornien und das Verschwinden des Außen*, ed. Diedrich Diederichsen and Anselm Franke (Berlin: Haus der Kulturen der Welt and Sternberg Press, 2013), 12–18.
- 39 Reinhild Kreis, "Heimwerken als Protest: Instandbesetzer und Wohnungsbaupolitik in West-Berlin während der 1980er Jahre," *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 14 (2017): 41–67.
- 40 Metzel, "Ed Kienholz und Nancy Reddin Kienholz," 167.
- 41 Walter Hopps, ed., *Kienholz Retrospektive: Edward und Nancy Reddin Kienholz* (München: Prestel, 1997), 285. My translation.

- 42 At this time, the West Berlin squatter scene was very active and the International Building Exhibition IBA (1987), which pursued the concept of careful urban renewal, had been in preparation since 1978.
- 43 Such competitions for Ernst Reuter Square are still being held today: ProStadt, "Durchführung eines städtebaulichen Workshopverfahrens für den Ernst-Reuter-Platz," accessed May 14, 2026, <https://www.prostadt.de/staedtebauliches-workshopverfahren-ernst-reuter-platz-202.html>; Berlin Open Data, "Ideenwettbewerb: Smart City Berlin – Ernst-Reuter-Platz," accessed May 14, 2026. <https://daten.berlin.de/artikel/ideenwettbewerb-smart-city-berlin-ernst-reuter-platz>.

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Predlog Eda in Nancy Kienholz za *Berlinsko fontano* (*The Berlin Fountain*; 1981/83): ironični komentar o funkciji umetnosti v javnem prostoru Vzhodnega in Zahodnega Berlina v času hladne vojne

Povzetek

V poglavju je obravnavan natečaj za umetnine v javnem prostoru, ki ga je leta 1981 razpisala Tehniška univerza v Zahodnem Berlinu. Med zmagovalci sta bila umetnika Ed in Nancy Kienholz iz Kalifornije s predlogom fontane z naslovom *Berlinska fontana* (*The Berlin Fountain*), izbranim kot reminiscenca na Marcela Duchampa. Na Trg Ernsta Reuterja (*Ernst-Reuter-Platz*) sta se odzvala s posmehom: predlagala sta 30-metrsko fontano v obliki avtopralnice, ki bi neprekinjeno delovala dan in noč, dokler beli mercedes v njeni notranjosti – statusni simbol zahodnonemške gospodarske moči – po škropljenju in krtačenju ne bi bil zrel za odpad.

Trg Ernsta Reuterja, nekdANJI paradni projekt Zahodnega Berlina, je v petdesetih letih nastal na med vojno močno porušenem območju Charlottenburga kot veliko, avtomobilom prilagojeno krožišče, v katero se je stekalo pet glavnih cest. V njegovem središču je bila urejena zelena površina, vendar ni delovala kot dostopen javni prostor, saj so jo z vseh strani obdajale ceste, pešci pa so nanjo lahko prišli le skozi podhode. V osemdesetih letih je zato Trg Ernsta Reuterja postal simbol povojnega urbanizma, podrejenega avtomobilu, ki so ga okoljsko ozaveščena civilnodružbena gibanja ostro kritizirala. Krožišče je bilo zasnovano tudi kot zahodnoberlinska protipodoba reprezentativnemu socialističnemu Strausberškemu trgu (*Strausberger Platz*) v Vzhodnem Berlinu. V Vzhodnem Berlinu so bile stanovanjske in poslovne stavbe zasnovane kot simetrično sklenjene socialistične družbene strukture, Trg Ernsta Reuterja pa so obdajale univerzitetne stavbe in predvsem prostostoječe zgradbe v lasti zasebnih podjetij, kot so Telefunken, Osram, AEG in IBM. V skladu s tradicijo Speerove osi vzhod–zahod tu za meščane – niti za prebivalce soseske – ni bilo prostora.

Ed Kienholz in Nancy Reddin Kienholz sta bila med tremi zmagovalci prvega natečaja za participativne projekte, ki ga je razpisala Tehniška univerza v Berlinu in na katerega je bilo povabljenih skupaj osemnajst umetnikov. Njun model je bil leta 1983 razstavljen na Tehniški univerzi v Berlinu. Žirija, ki ji je predsedoval umetnik Otto Piene, soustanovitelj umetniške

skupine ZERO in profesor vizualnega oblikovanja okoljske umetnosti na MIT v Cambridgeu v Massachusettsu, se je odločno zavzela za uresničitev *Berlinske fontane*. Še desetletja pozneje so mnogi obžalovali, da ta jedka, ogorčena, a hkrati humorna kritika z avtomobilom obsedene družbe blaginje ni bila postavljena v javni prostor.

O razlogih, zakaj *Berlinska fontana* ni bila nikoli uresničena, je bilo veliko ugibanj. Ali lokalni politiki niso hoteli, da bi Ed in Nancy Kienholz opozorila na zgodovino kraja, zaznamovano z nacionalsocializmom? So se bali, da bi bila skulptura razumljena kot podoba poskusa Zahodnih Nemcev, da bi se po letu 1945 očistili svoje zgodovinske krivde – šoa – in se namesto tega opredelili s prikazom gospodarske rasti? So hoteli preprečiti, da bi Ed in Nancy Kienholz na Trgu Ernsta Reuterja ustvarila protipodobo kipu *Plamen* (*Die Flamme*), ki ga je v zgodnjih šestdesetih letih ustvaril Bernhard Heiliger, nekdanji učenec Arna Brekerja?

V poglavju je predlagan širši pogled. Natečaj, na katerem sta sodelovala Ed in Nancy Kienholz, je bil prvi natečaj za participativne projekte v Zahodnem Berlinu. Povezan je bil z novim razumevanjem mesta. Skvoterji v Zahodnem Berlinu so okrepili zavest, da je treba pri urbanističnem načrtovanju upoštevati tudi interese prebivalcev. Anarhistični projekt Kienholzevih bi lahko pripeljal do zavezništva med skvoterskim gibanjem in umetniško sceno. Čeprav je *Berlinska fontana* ostala neuresničena, se v poglavju zagovarja mnenje, da je treba njeno zasnovo, značilno za kontrakulturna gibanja osemdesetih let v ZDA in Zahodnem Berlinu, obravnavati kot del zgodovine umetnosti v javnem prostoru.

A substantial body of postwar art created for institutional environments remains hidden in plain sight: in schools, hospitals, municipal offices, factories, hotels, shops, and other spaces of everyday life. Some works remain intact, others survive in altered interiors or as partial material remains, and still others are known only through scattered archival records, photographs, and uncertain

memories. Many have been covered, relocated, destroyed or forgotten, even though they formed an important part of postwar public space and visual culture.

This volume contributes to the transnational study of art

commissioned for public institutions, a field that remains unevenly researched across national contexts. The chapters show how institutions used art to shape their environments and how later changes in use or ownership affected the works' meanings and prospects for preservation.

