

**Project documentation**

# **Cottbusser Tor**

**Bruno Di Lecce  
Claudia Olendrowicz**

**curated by  
Bárbara Cueto**



vessel  
room  
project

“In fact, we can only very roughly estimate what kind of reactions those unconsciously remaining influences of unmanageable, informal accumulations of building have on people who live here, who love here, who are continuing living here and die here.”

Alexander Mitscherlich  
„Die Unwirtlichkeit der Städte“

Neues Kreuzberger Zentrum is an emblematic building in the geography of Berlin, a symbol of both renovation and decay. Its unavoidable architecture represents a determination to articulate the new life of Berlin; a utopian view of a city in flux. However, the inevitable effervescence of the city ended up collapsing with the all willingness of possible renovation. What was a reflex of a new epoch, became ruins for a new community. NKZ was an impressive project with more than 350 apartments, and 1.500 m<sup>2</sup> of diverse stores and offices. This megalomaniac construction, high and robust, was conceived to renew the old and abandoned Cottbusser Tor. Maintaining the idea of “tor”, it created a bridge over the Adalbertstraße, an entrance to a revamped West Berlin. However, soon after its opening in

1974, the NKZ developed rapidly into a conflict zone, and a hot spot for drug abuse and violence. Its architecture design made it even more unmanageable - intricate and claustrophobic corridors, stairs and hallways inside; blind spots and narrow side-streets in the outside. The utopic Neues Kreuzberger Zentrum came to be one of the most famous examples of Failed Architecture. Made of concrete, coloured with yellow windows and hundreds of balconies stuffed with antennas; its materiality is inescapable. On its 40th birthday, Claudia Olendrowicz & Bruno Di Lecce look for the traces that represent as well as humanise this monster building. They reflect on its overwhelming presence to reinterpret the construction of the edifice, using very different media to depict the dystopic universe shaped by NKZ.

Claudia Olendrowicz & Bruno Di Lecce form an unconventional collective, developing projects together, but creating separated artworks. With a site-responsive approach, they both reinvent spaces of action, looking for traces in the lived spaces where they work. Those remains of a life fading away are the protagonists of their stories. Stories that talk

about the pass of time, formation of identity and the complexity of representing reality. The title carries in itself a declaration of intentions; the artists misspell the name to create a parallel Cottbusser Tor. By decoding the building in its elementary parts, they explore the vestiges that give identity to the square. The artworks uncover the impossibility of a utopian construction, the immanent failure of grandiosity.

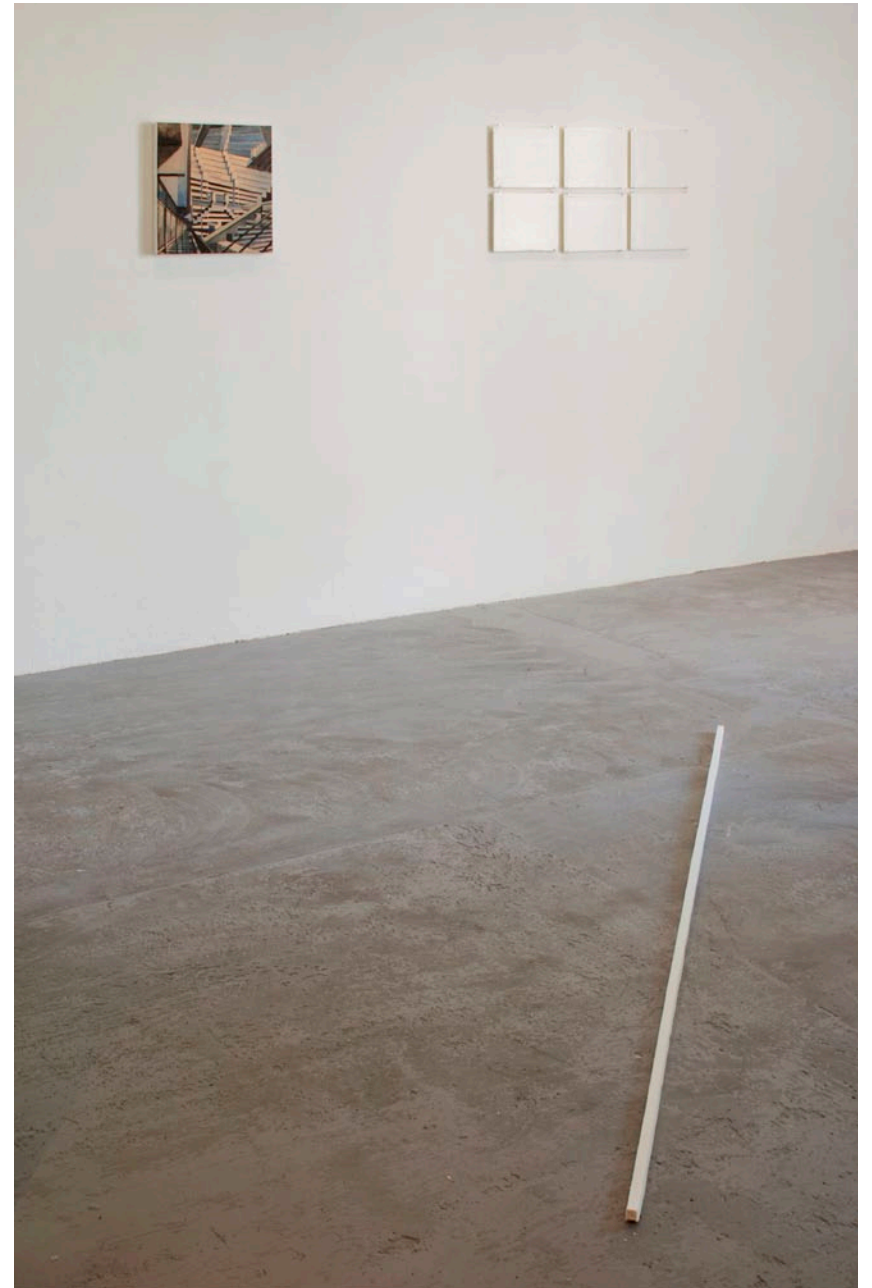
The artists focus on the difficulties in the representation of lived-spaces. Claudia explores the construction of identity, and Bruno the comprehension of a place. With a holistic approach, together they create an ensemble that delineates a new fictional Cottbusser Tor. Claudia's oeuvre pivots around the usage of materials that are able of tracing identity. She reverts their original function, and by transposing them, their nature becomes self-evident, unveiling effects of an ever-changing society. By contrast, Bruno Di Lecce investigates the representativity of reality. His artworks are conceived as proposals to overcome the impossibility of an objective representation. Hence creating a multiverse of options, imaginary views of a labyrinthian NKZ. His “Wanderung”

follows the same idea - floating on a weightless, soundproof white background, a measuring tape hopelessly trying to estimate the dimensions of an impracticable place.

“Wirtlichkeit I” by Claudia Olendrowicz crosses the gallery space dividing, connecting or appraising it. A bridge made of soap, a ductile and imperfect bond that leads to its correlative: “Wirtlichkeit II”. A set of six tiles paradoxically made of grout. The porosity of the material absorbs all evidence of interaction, turning them into relics of lived-spaces. Like the plaster of “Next”, compelled to be imprint empty pockets of invisible trousers. The passing of time and people is engraved on her artworks, revealing the humanity in those inert materials; and thus portraying a dynamic social environment.

Materiality is at the core of Claudia Olendrowicz's work, whereas Bruno Di Lecce focuses on the struggle for objectivity. Notwithstanding their approach, they create an intertwined story, a set of proposals that unravel at Vesselroom Project. They complement each other, finding ways of representing both space and society in its essence.

Installation view



In "Wirtlichkeit II" the joint is defined as being a space of possibilities. In "Wirtlichkeit I", the morphology of the joint has been maintained but is, ironically, constructed of soap, highlighting the physicality and thus the convertibility and fragility of the structure.

Claudia Olendrowicz

Wirtlichkeit I  
Soap, variable dimensions



One of the greatest utopias of modern times has been the abandoning of the soil and the negation of the surface on which biological life exists. The result of this negation has been the construction of a new and rational realm over which man exerts control thanks to the use of technology. In distancing himself from the earth, man creates a second Nature, a space built for the sole purpose of increasing the speed of mobility and controlling time. The starting point for this painting is an existing urban scenario, the NKZ Kottbuser Tor building in Berlin, the verticality of which the painting exaggerates to an extreme extent, evoking a fragmentary and visionary sense of space redolent of Piranesi's imaginary prisons.

Bruno Di Lecce

Cottbuser Tor  
Oil on canvas, 40 x 40 cm



Plaster is often used to repair holes in walls: it contributes to the illusion of a perfect surface and eliminates traces of prior events. Here a pocket is filled with plaster, which on one hand gives shape and volume to the pocket, and on the other hand seals the opening via which this content can be accessed.

Claudia Olendrowicz

Next  
Trousers pocket, plaster  
variable dimensions



Installation view



A measuring tape which is substituted for a dog leash represents the relationship between man and animal as a spatial distance.

A camera attached to the leash films the sequence of numbers visible on the tape over the course of a walk in the open air. Like an extension of the body, the dog (the protagonist), the measuring tape (the space) and the camera (the eye) combine to form a “vision machine”.

Bruno Di Lecce

Wanderung

Video 4.30 minutes

[www.vimeo.com/97159929](http://www.vimeo.com/97159929)





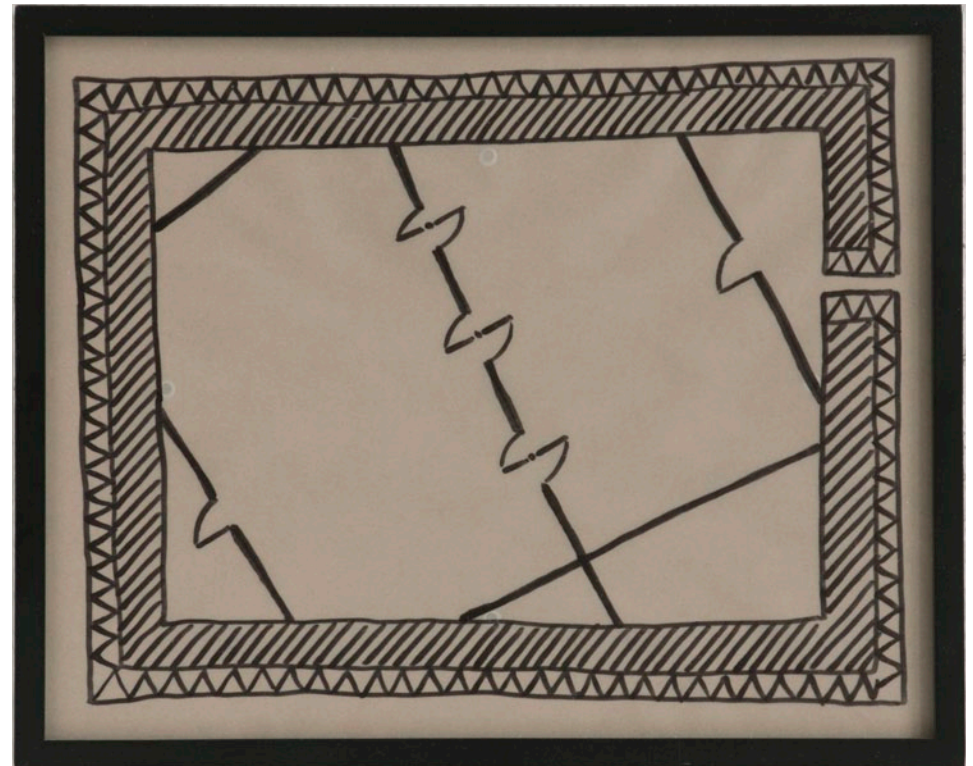
Installation view



The drawings in this series are utopian plans for architectural spaces the sole function of which is the playing of games. The bird's eye view of the plans becomes the game's perspective. Play has its own essence, independent of the consciousness of those who play. [...] The player experiences the game as a reality that surpasses him. Play reaches presentation through the players [...] the player is also played by the game (H. G. Gadamer). The architectural space represented here alludes to an idea of panoptic space, thus associating the perspective of the game with that of a supervising power.

Bruno Di Lecce

Game Spaces  
Pen on transparent paper,  
series each 24 x 30 cm



## Curator Biography

Bárbara Cueto (1986, Spain) is a Spanish curator and writer. She holds a BA in Journalism from Complutense University in Madrid and a MA in Arts & Heritage from Maastricht University. She lives in Berlin since 2010, working in several off-spaces like Grimmuseum and Autocenter, and developing parallel projects. In the Netherlands, she participated in the Young Talents Program of The Ridder in Maastricht and co-founded the curatorial collective Autonomous Department. She was guest curator at the Euregio Open House in Mönchengladbach, where she curated the Transnational Series. Currently, she is curator of Vesselroom Project in Berlin, a space for exploration of new media, investigation of theoretical discourses and observation of current trends. Recently Barbara Cueto has been selected as one of the participants of the Curatorial Program of De Appel Arts Centre in Amsterdam, supported by Fundación Botín.

## Colophon

This exhibition is made on the occasion of the 40th birthday of the Neues Kreuzberger Zentrum Berlin

29th of May until 14th of June 2014

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