

Press Kit

GESELLSCHAFT ZUR WERTSCHÄTZUNG DES BRUTALISMUS/ THE BRUTALISM APPRECIATION SOCIETY

Opening: Friday, 7th April 2017, 7 pm

Welcome: Edwin Jacobs, Director Dortmunder U, Introduction: Dr. Inke Arns, Artistic Director HMKV and curator of the exhibition

HMKV at Dortmunder U

8th April – 24th September 2017

Artists:

Bettina Allamoda (US/DE)

Jordi Colomer (ES)

Darco FBI (DE/FR)

EVOL (DE)

Darko Fritz (HR)

Anne-Valérie Gasc (FR)

Niklas Goldbach (DE)

Freya Hattenberger & Peter Simon (DE/PL)

Alekos Hofstetter (DE)

Martin Kohout (CZ)

Aglaia Konrad (AT/BE)

Nicolas Moulin (FR/DE)

Reto Müller (CH)

Andrea Pichl (DE)

Heidi Specker (DE)

Philip Topolovac (DE)

Kay Walkowiak (AT)

Ruben Woodin Dechamps &

Oscar Hudson (UK)

Tobias Zielony (DE)



Jordi Colomer, Anarchitekton (Bucharest) 2003

The radical architectural style of Brutalism first emerged in Britain in the mid-1950s. Its hallmarks are unrendered concrete walls and exposed building materials such as metal, stone and brick. Today it is gradually disappearing from our city skylines, as the largely unlisted buildings are pulled down. At the same time, supporters of the style have started coming together – particularly online. Among them is the Facebook group “The Brutalism Appreciation Society”, which campaigns to preserve these features of 1950s and 1960s town planning, and now has more than 50,000 members worldwide.

The exhibition *The Brutalism Appreciation Society*, curated by Inke Arns, showcases 21 works by international artists, responding to the Brutalist architectural style of post-war modernity, as well as selected posts from the eponymous Facebook group. The 21 participating artists come from 11 countries: Belgium, Germany, France, Great Britain, Croatia, Austria, Poland, Switzerland, Spain, the Czech Republic and the USA. Many of the artists will attend the opening of the exhibition on Friday 7th April.

Pressekontakt

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HMKV im Dortmunder U

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In addition to artistic media such as sculptures, videos, video installations, soundscapes, street art and photography, the exhibition space features a large-scale graffiti work by the internationally renowned Paris-based graffiti artist Darco FBI. The work has been developed onsite at the HMKV, and is a defining design element of the exhibition.

The exhibition is funded by the Ministry of Family, Children, Youth, Culture and Sport of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia, the Kunststiftung NRW and the LWL-Kulturstiftung. Generously supported by the Wüstenrot Stiftung. Main funder of the HMKV is the Dortmunder U - Zentrum für Kunst und Kreativität; media partners are Heimatdesign, bodo and coolibri.

Detailed description

Prince Charles once said that Brutalism had done more damage to Great Britain than the bombs of the German Luftwaffe during the Second World War.ⁱ But contrary to this (rather tongue-in-cheek) royal pronouncement, “Brutalism” has little to do with brutality or brutal architecture; the word originally comes from Le Corbusier’s expression “béton brut” (literally: raw concrete), the French term for exposed concrete. The term Brutalism was coined by the British architect Alison Smithson in 1953, and brought to the attention of the architectural world in December 1955 by Reyner Banham, with his essay on “The New Brutalism” for *Architectural Review*.ⁱⁱ

In this essay, Banham set out three central criteria for Brutalism: “1, formal legibility of plan, 2, clear exhibition of structure and 3, valuation of materials for their inherent qualities ‘as found’.” Banham rounds off his list by adding the necessity of a radical, uncompromising attitude. The first Brutalist building is generally accepted to be the school in Hunstanton, UK by Alison und Peter Smithson (1949–1954). Buildings by Le Corbusier, in particular the convent of Sainte-Marie de la Tourette near Évèux-sur-l’Arbresle (1953-1960) and the Unités d’Habitation in Marseille (1947-1952), Nantes (1950-1955) and Berlin (1956-1958) also shaped the style. Brutalism predominated in the 1960s and was still in evidence into the 1980s, before it became deeply unfashionable. It is only in the past ten years that it has experienced a phase of rediscovery, especially where Brutalist buildings have been demolished or undergone disfiguring renovations.

Why Brutalism now?

The starting point for *The Brutalism Appreciation Society* exhibition at HMKV is the Facebook group of the same name started in 2007 to bring together fans of Brutalist architecture. The group now has more than 50,000 members worldwide, and since the end of 2015 its membership has doubled in size. Their stated aim: “As they start to disappear from our cities, this group is for anyone who appreciates buildings built in this much maligned architectural style.”ⁱⁱⁱ Devotees of the radical architectural style are also to be found on other social media, for example the Twitter account This Brutal House (@brutalhouse) or the Tumblr account Fuck Yeah Brutalism (<http://fuckyeahbrutalism.tumblr.com/>).

But why is Brutalism so popular on social media now? As Raphael Dillhof puts it: “Audacious, hard and uncompromising, the monster buildings in unrendered concrete appear on the timelines of social media, mostly in dramatic low-angle shots.”^{iv} According to Dillhof, Brutalism functions here as a “welcome counterbalance to the artful, technology-filled

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investor architecture of Frank Gehry, Zaha Hadid et al.” He argues that Brutalism stands for authenticity, in opposition to cultural over-refinement. The celebration of concrete is to be understood as a statement in favour of the primitive, and against the spectre of an alienated and alienating modernity. At the same time, however, this popularity is paradoxical: the now largely unsuccessful “forms of collective living” propagated by Brutalism “are actually being rejected today by the self-indulgent individualists of the Instagram generation.”^v

The exhibition has been inspired by the activities of The Brutalism Appreciation Society Facebook group – though at the same time it is a significantly larger follow-on from the extremely successful HMKV exhibitions “*Jetzt helfe ich mir selbst*” – *Die 100 besten Video-Tutorials aus dem Netz* (Now I Can Help Myself – the 100 Best Internet Video Tutorials) (2014) and *Digital Folklore* (2015). These two projects featured user-generated content, selected and displayed in an exhibition space. However, *The Brutalism Appreciation Society* – in contrast to the two earlier Net culture exhibitions – consists largely of artistic works, which form the majority of the exhibition. Alongside them, digital posts from The Brutalism Appreciation Society Facebook group will be featured.

Focal points of the exhibition

The first part of the exhibition to catch the viewer’s eye is the *artistic responses to existing Brutalist buildings*. The Austrian artist **Aglaia Konrad**, for example, explores two classics of the genre: Fritz Wotruba’s Church of the Most Holy Trinity in Vienna, and the Sainte Bernadette du Banlay church in Nevers, by Claude Parent und Paul Virilio. **Reto Müller** also responds to Parent and Virilio’s bunker-like church, but contrasts this with a profane building: the Claude-Parent-designed shopping centre in Ris-Orangis. **Heidi Specker** gives us a portrait of the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London’s South Bank Centre, while **Kay Walkowiak** travels to a classic of Brutalism in Chandigarh in India and documents the everyday use of this “machine for living in”. **Tobias Zielony** takes us to Naples and Kiev: in Naples, he looks at the concrete buildings of Vele di Scampia, a Camorra stronghold, and in Kiev the “Institute of Scientific and Technical Information”, a building reminiscent of a recently-landed UFO. **Niklas Goldbach** travels to the futuristic Paris quarter of Front de Seine and films unsettling scenes and chases there. **Freya Hattenberger & Peter Simon** record sounds in the Brutalist Church of St Gertrud in Cologne, designed by Gottfried Böhm, and **Jordi Colomer** demonstrates in favour of “Anarchitekton” in Barcelona, Bucharest, Brazil and Osaka.

The exhibition also contains *speculative elements* – ideas and imaginings developed by artists taking their inspiration from existing Brutalist structures. **Philip Topolovac** was struck by the huge ventilation shafts of the metro in Prague’s cityscape, which he documented in photos. Four of the shafts also became the starting points for architectonic speculations: the artist tried to imagine how the massive structures might continue underground. The results are fascinating sculptures of retro-futuristic spaceships. **Nicolas Moulin** develops a plan by the German architect Herman Sörgel from the late 1920s: Sörgel wanted to use a colossal dam project in the Strait of Gibraltar (*Atlantropa*) to lower the level of the Mediterranean by several hundred metres, turning Europe and Africa into a new continent. Moulin calls this new land “Azurazia” and designs a new Brutalist (capital) city for it. **Ruben Woodin Dechamps & Oscar Hudson** take the Brutalist partisan monuments in the former Yugoslavia as the starting point for a bizarre story: in their film, they interview a man who claims to have been in contact with an alien civilisation for the past 30 years.

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Alekos Hofstetter, meanwhile, is convinced that nothing ages as quickly as our idea of the future – and this is also true for architecture. His work explores a “now obsolete concrete future”.

Brutalism and *socialist prefabricated buildings* are conceptually related - as works by Andrea Pichl, Darko Fritz and EVOL included in the exhibition show. **Andrea Pichl** uses an architectonic detail from Le Corbusier's first “machine for living in” in Marseille, built between 1947-1952, to arrange ready-made concrete building components, photos of prefab buildings from Tashkent in Uzbekistan, and individual “prefab doors and windows” removed from empty buildings. Using a mixture of wit and irony, **Darko Fritz** traces the expansion of the Croatian capital Zagreb in the 1960s and 70s, with the help of archive pictures, architectural models, old photographs and computer animations. And **EVOL** makes an impact with a complete miniature prefab settlement on six euro-pallets. A closer look reveals that it is made of breeze blocks on which the Berlin street artist has sprayed little windows.

A few works in the exhibition do not draw directly on architectural style; rather, their approach to materials and media is very close to the Brutalist *understanding of materials*: **Martin Kohout** has recorded a kind of skateboarding video with his mobile phone, the device rattling along railings, scraping down walls, rasping across asphalt and walls until the camera gives up the ghost. The sound turns a visual experience into something very physical. **Bettina Allamoda**'s work, specially developed for the HMKV exhibition space, consists of a huge length of material stretched tight between some of the supporting pillars. The French artist **Anne-Valérie Gasc** provides an unusual perspective on the usual treatment of unpopular architecture: She places cameras inside buildings scheduled for demolition, which film the detonation close up. A devastating experience in the truest sense of the word.

And finally, we present *strategies of appropriation*, which can almost always be found where there is severe concrete architecture: skateboarding and graffiti. **Kay Walkowiak** gets the Spanish pro skater Kilian Martin to skate over minimalist sculptures, while **Tobias Zielony** observes the young people who hang around in the Neapolitan tower blocks of Vele di Scampia. The graffiti artist **Darco FBI** has sprayed five large pictures in the exhibition space, which themselves take on elements of Brutalist architecture.

Artists' CVs

Bettina Allamoda, *1964 in Chicago (US), 1983-1990 studied at the Hochschule der Künste, Berlin und Central/St. Martins School of Art & Design, London; works with collage, performance/happening, sculpture, video; lives and works in Berlin (DE).

Jordi Colomer, *1962 in Barcelona (ES); studied at the Eina School of Art and Design, History of Art and Architecture in Barcelona; represents Spain at the 57th Venice Biennial (2017); lives and works in Barcelona (ES) and Paris (FR).

Darco FBI, *1968 in Bielefeld (DE), graffiti artist (style writer); in 1985 he founded the group FBI in Paris together with Gawki and others; 1988 convicted as the first sprayer in France for „destruction of common property“; lives and works in Paris (FR).

EVOL, *1972; studied at the HFG Schwäbisch Gmünd (2001); recent solo exhibitions 2015 *Unreal Estate*, Jonathan LeVine gallery, New York; Aedes Architecture Forum, Berlin; lives and works in Berlin (DE) and Moscow (RU).

Darko Fritz, *1966 in Croatia; artist, independent curator and graphic designer; 1988-1990 studied architecture at the University of Zagreb, 1990-1992 studied media art at the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam; lives and works in Zagreb (HR).

Anne-Valérie Gasc, *1975; in 2005 she graduated in fine art at the Université Paris I; solo exhibitions a.o. 2016 *Les larmes du Prince*, Galerie Gourvenec Ogor, Marseille; 2014 *Crash Box*, Friche belle de mai, Marseille; lives and works in Marseille & Paris (FR).

Niklas Goldbach, *1973 in Witten (DE); 2000-2003 studied experimental media art at the UDK Berlin; 2005 Meisterschüler at the UDK Berlin; solo exhibitions a.o. 2016 *12x12*, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin; 2017 Villa Aurora Artist in Residency Program, Los Angeles; lives and works in Berlin (DE).

Freya Hattenberger, *1978 in Offenbach (DE); studied media art at the KHM in Cologne; **Peter Simon**, *1969 in Częstochowa (PL); 1995-2000 studied media art at the KHM in Cologne; both artists collaborate as Les Eclairs; live and work in Cologne (DE).

Alekos Hofstetter, *1967 in Bonn (DE); raised in Brussels, Bangkok & Bonn. After dropping out of his philosophy studies he moved to Dresden in 1989 & founded the artists collective BEWEGUNG NURR (with C. Steuer & D. H. Wild); lives and works in Berlin (DE).

Martin Kohout, *1984 in Prague (CZ); 1990 first knock-out tooth (fall from tricycle), 1993 two times knock-out tooth (fall when walking on a paving, and slip on a wet foliage while pushing a concrete block up to the hill); 1996 two knock-out teeth (fall from bicycle) (...); 2010 broke tooth while eating candy; lives and works in Berlin (DE).

Aglaia Konrad, *1960 in Salzburg (AT); exhibitions a.o. 1997 *documenta X*, Kassel; 1998-1999 *Cities on the Move*, Bordeaux, New York, London, Helsinki, Vienna; 2000 *Shanghai Biennale*; 2003 Camera Austria Prize, Graz; 2007 Albert Renger Patzsch Prize, Essen; lives and works in Brussels (BE).

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Nicolas Moulin, *1970 in Paris (FR); studied at the Académie des Beaux-Arts de Cergy-Pontoise; solo exhibitions a.o. 2015 FRAC Centre, Orléans; 2014 *Steppterminal*, Le 180, Rouen; runs the music label Grautag, Berlin; lives and works in Berlin (DE).

Reto Müller, *1984 in Schaffhausen (CH), solo exhibitions a.o. 2017 *Potentielle Normaliensammlung*, Kunsthaus Langenthal (CH); lives and works in Stein am Rhein (CH).

Andrea Pichl, *1964 in Haldensleben (DE); 1991-96 Kunsthochschule Berlin, Berlin; 1998 Master of Arts, Chelsea College of Art & Design, London; solo exhibitions a.o. 2014 Moritzburg, Halle (Saale); IG Metall, Berlin; M HKA, Museum for Contemporary Art, Antwerpen; lives and works in Berlin (DE).

Heidi Specker, *1962 in Damme (DE); 1990 diploma design & visual communication University of Applied Arts Bielefeld; 1995 Meisterschülerin with Joachim Brohm at the HGB Leipzig; solo exhibitions a.o. 2016 Berlinische Galerie, Berlin; Professor for Photography and Media at the HGB Leipzig; lives and works in Berlin (DE).

Philip Topolovac, *1979 in Würzburg (DE), 2001-2008 studied fine art, UDK, Berlin; 2009 Meisterschüler with Christiane Möbus, UDK, Berlin; 2007-2011 founder & member of the project space TÄT, Berlin; 2014 Stiftung Kunstfonds grant; lives and works in Berlin (DE).

Kay Walkowiak, *1980 in Salzburg (AT); studied philosophy & psychology at the University of Vienna; photography & video art at the Academy of Fine Arts, Vienna; and art & communicative practice and sculpture & multimedia at the University of Applied Arts, Vienna; lives and works in Vienna (AT).

Ruben Woodin Dechamps & Oscar Hudson (UK), film directors who work in the field of drama, short films, music videos and documentary films; live and work in London (UK).

Tobias Zielony, *1973 in Wuppertal (DE); studied documentary photography, University of Wales, Newport; from 2001 class for artistic photography (Timm Rautert), HGB Leipzig; solo exhibitions a.o. 2007 C/O Berlin, 2011 Museum Folkwang, Essen & Camera Austria, Graz, 2013 Berlinische Galerie, Berlin; 2015 German Pavilion Venice Biennale; lives and works in Berlin (DE).

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

EXCURSIONS TO BRUTALIST BUILDINGS IN THE RUHRGEBIET

20th May 2017, 11:00-16:00, 8th July 2017, 11:00-16:00

Led by an architect, art historian or artist, participants will have the opportunity to come to engage with Brutalist architecture in the Ruhrgebiet, discuss issues and at the same time contribute to the mapping of the Brutalist buildings in NRW. For more information on excursion destinations and leaders, see: www.hmkv.de

BRUTALISM IN THE RUHR – A CALL FOR COLLABORATIVE MAPPING

April – August 2017

The Ruhr area is home to some significant Brutalist architecture. We want to make it visible! We are collecting photos of the region's Brutalist buildings. Join in and receive free tickets for the exhibition as well as a map showing all the documented sites at the end of the exhibition.

GUIDED TOURS

PUBLIC GUIDED TOURS

Sundays and public holidays 16:00; Thursdays 18:00

We offer two guided tours per week of the exhibition *The Brutalism Appreciation Society*

Meeting point: entrance to the exhibition, included in your ticket price

Length: approx. 45 minutes

CURATOR'S TOURS

Sat, 8th April 2017, 2nd September 2017, 16:00

The curator Inke Arns provides insights into the ideas behind the exhibition and how it was developed.

Meeting point: entrance to the exhibition, included in your ticket price

Length: approx. 60 minutes

TOURS WITH OUR INCLUSIVE TEAM

In cooperation with *I can be your translator* we are developing some very special tours of our exhibitions in an inclusive team. There isn't just one way of looking at art! And so we explore the exhibition together, discussing questions, exchanging views and creating an informative and interactive tour for our visitors.

For times, see www.hmkv.de

Meeting point: entrance to the exhibition, included in your ticket price

Length: approx. 45 minutes

TOURS FOR TEACHERS AND EDUCATORS

A guided tour of the exhibition, with additional information on how to use the exhibition content in lessons.

Registration and further information: info@hmkv.de

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SPECIAL GUIDED TOURS ON DEMAND

For groups of up to 25 people

Individually bookable at any time. Also available in English. Advance booking (at least 7 days in advance) only.

Tours in German sign language available on request.

60 € plus individual or group ticket price

Concessions: 40 € plus individual or group ticket price

Registration and further information: info@hmkv.de

KIDS' RALLYE

Collect it for free from the information desk at any time

Want to explore our exhibition by yourself? Our Kids' Rallye is waiting for you at the entrance to the exhibition (in German only)!

QUESTIONS? TALK TO US!

Our information team will be happy to answer your questions and can provide detailed information on the exhibition, and the individual works and artists. No matter who you talk to – take the opportunity to learn more!

YOU LIKED IT BUT TIME WAS TOO SHORT?

Then come again! You can exchange your tickets at our information desk and return to *The Brutalism Appreciation Society* at any time.

ACCOMPANYING FILM PROGRAMME

BANDE DE FILLES

Thu, 13 April 2017, 20:00

Fri, 14 April 2017, 20:00

FR, 2014, 113 min. | Dir: Céline Sciamma

AUS WESTLICHER RICHTUNG

Tue, 9 May 2017, 20:00

DE, 2016, 61 min. | Dir: Juliane Henrich

HIGH RISE

September 2017, tba

UK/BE, 2016, 119 min. | Dir: Ben Wheatley

Please check www.kino-im-u.de for more information.

FURTHERMORE

Dates for your diaries: from 7th October 2017 to 25th February 2018, the **Deutsche Architekturmuseum (DAM) in Frankfurt am Main** will be hosting the **SOS Brutalismus – Rettet die Betonmonster (SOS Brutalism – Save the concrete monsters)** exhibition. *SOS Brutalismus* is a joint project by DAM and the Wüstenrot Stiftung. For the first time, it will present a global overview of Brutalist architecture between 1953 and 1979. The www.SOSBrutalism.org database is supported by the online magazine *BauNetz*.

The HMKV is a member of the Arbeitsgemeinschaft Deutscher Kunstvereine (ADKV), which comprises 297 art associations from 244 towns and communities. In February 2017, **HMKV was nominated for the ADKV-ART COLOGNE prize for art associations for the sixth time**. We and the 20 other nominees are delighted, and looking forward to the prize-giving on 28th April 2017 at Art Cologne. Keep your fingers crossed for us!

Notes

ⁱ “You have to give this much to the Luftwaffe: when it knocked down our buildings, it didn’t replace them with anything more offensive than rubble.” In: Alastair Jamieson „The Prince of Wales on architecture: his 10 'monstrous carbuncles’”, in: *The Telegraph*, 13th May 2009, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/uknews/theroyalfamily/5317802/The-Prince-of-Wales-on-architecture-his-10-monstrous-carbuncles.html>.

ⁱⁱ Reyner Banham, “The New Brutalism”, in: *Architectural Review*, 12/1955.

ⁱⁱⁱ Facebook group The Brutalism Appreciation Society, <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2256189436/>

^{iv} Raphael Dillhof, “Aber hier leben, nein danke! Brutalismus als digitaler Zombie”, in: *art – Das Kunstmagazin*, 4th December 2015, <http://www.art-magazin.de/architektur/12159-rtkl-brutalismus-als-digitaler-zombie-aber-hier-leben-nein-danke>

^v Dillhof, *ibid*.