

12 650 000

25 black and white photographs framed
5. berlin biennale for contemporary art
05.04. – 15.06.2008
Neue National Galerie, Berlin

Few will be acquainted with the mammoth, inert and indestructable concrete thing (for lack of a better word) weighing 12,650,000 kilograms and located in Berlin's Tempelhof district, despite it being registered as a historical landmark since 1995. Susanne Kriemann's 12 650 000 addresses this 'Schwerbelastungskörper' (heavy-load-testing structure) built in 1941 as part of Albert Speer's plan for Berlin as 'World Capital Germania' and in order to assess the weight-bearing capacity of the city's sandy ground.

In nearly all her projects, Kriemann decodes buildings and other large structures as physical embodiments of ideology and forgotten meaning. She interpolates them with a view to their social suggestiveness in order to bring out the paradoxes they incorporate.

12 650 000 is no exception. Kriemann's installation combines vintage photographs from 1941 of the half finished structure with a range of contemporary photographs documenting the unveiling of the freshly renovated 'concrete thing'. By juxtaposing appropriated historic image material with her own contemporary photographs, Kriemann brings into play conflicting notions of history, architecture and memory. For who could have foreseen the absurdity of the simultaneous demolition of the Palast der Republik and the renovation of the 'Schwerbelastungskörper'? By means of its seemingly abstract title 12 650 000 and accompanying photographs, Susanne Kriemann's installation interrogates the city's unconscious and the 'weight' of history in post-unification Berlin.

Christine Nippe

(source: Short Guide bb5 – Day, courtesy; Berlin Biennale 5)