

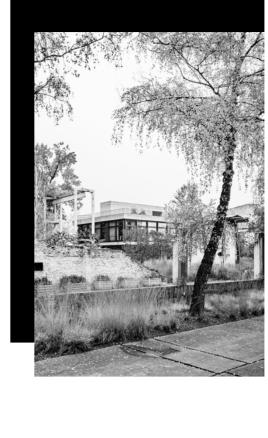


THE JUXTAPOSITION BETWEEN REYLE'S MAXIMALISM AND LINCKE'S AFFINITY FOR THE RAW BEAUTY

DEFINES THEIR HOME AND ITS SURROUNDINGS.

MATERIALITY,

FUNCTIONAL



CONVERTING AN ABANDONED GDR PROPERTY IN EAST BERLIN INTO A HOME AND STUDIO GAVE ANSELM ARTIST AND ARCHITECT TANJA LINCKE THE CHANCE TO REDISCOVER THE BEAUTY OF CREATIVE FREEDOM.

PHOTOGRAPHY WICHMANN + BENDTSEN

WORDS KAREN ORTON

STYLING HELLE WALSTED



THAT THE COUPLE APPLIED TO THE REST OF THE PROPERTY. NATURAL, LOOKS BUT IT'S ALL PLANNED.

THESE RUINS WERE CREATED WITH THE SAME PAINSTAKING

TO

IN 2008, ARTIST Anselm Reyle and architect Tanja Lincke

were neighbours living in the same apartment building in Berlin's

OF

Friedrichshain neighbourhood. The couple happened to meet and fall in love at a critical juncture. Reyle had just bought the former headquarters of the GDR harbour police in the far east of the city on the Spree river to house his large, thriving studio and growing team of assistants. Lincke, was trained as an architect but had yet to work as one, and was doing press for the Federal Chamber of German Architects. As the global recession hit that year, Reyle faced his own financial crisis, when he was abruptly displaced from his position at the centre of the contemporary art market. One of Germany's biggest names in the art world, he was known for his silver-foil paintings and large sculptural works. "It felt like everything was over," Reyle says, recalling his plans to sell the riverside property. "I thought, 'I can't keep this, it's too much.' But when I brought Tanja there, she said, 'You have to keep it. Try your best, somehow." Today, the couple lives here in their home overlooking the Spree, with their two children, aged six and eight. Their house is an elegant, Brutalist cube constructed of concrete and glass, supported by pillars. It's not only a testament to Lincke's instinct to hold onto the land, but to her skill as an architect. The remains of the harbour police station, which the couple partly demolished, lie at the centre of the complex, surrounded by a refurbished studio and newly constructed home and auxiliary buildings. They've planted a wild mix of grasses, flowers and species of native trees over the ruins of the station. It's an eerily beautiful, otherworldly scene; simultaneously evoking

elements of 1960s and 70s-era Socialist Modernism and a postapocalyptic, industrial landscape. The frame of the vast doorway that once housed the harbour boat repair workshop, now frames a view of the river and a chimney stack stands bereft of the building it once Tanja Lincke and Anselm Reyle created a new home and studio on the site of

From the walls to the columns, the concrete in the house has an

unpretentious warmth to it. "There are so many concrete buildings

that you don't feel comfortable in because the concrete is too flat

and too perfect." she says. "Everybody wants to have it easy to clean

and super shiny. But I tried to keep the atmosphere of the material

artist passed away in 2012, was the answer.

THINGS

it was not like, 'Oh there's the new house," she says. "But it also shouldn't look retro. It's not whether it's old or new, it's just natural, like it belongs here."

presided over. A simple doorframe stands in isolation, complete with an exit light. It still lights up automatically every evening despite

leading nowhere. "You can still feel the space that was here," Lincke

says, referring to the building's former life. Almost every evening,

she and Reyle take an evening stroll, sometimes walking around the

ruins up to 50 times. It's a ritual where they can discuss work and

ideas as the children sleep. It feels fitting that this patch of land,

abandoned by the GDR after reunification and lying desolate for 20

For Lincke, it was a dream first architectural commission. "I felt

that I needed to build something; that's why I studied architecture,"

she says. "When I met Anselm and he asked me to transform the

building, I thought, 'Well, let's try this.' It was like jumping into

cold water. But I was happy to have an existing building to work

with. It's sometimes easier than beginning completely from scratch."

In total, she designed four spaces on the almost one-hectare property; the industrial shed turned studio, a garage that has been converted

into guest rooms, a gym and a music room, a huge storage space

that houses Reyle's work and art collection, as well as the family

home. "This area was built in the 70s, and it was important that

years, has been given a new life as a creative haven.

The central building of the harbour police was too rotten to be rescued and Reyle came up with the idea of making a romantic garden of ruins rather than building something new. "These former industrial places have a special atmosphere and we tried to create that here," Lincke says. These ruins were created with the same painstaking attention to detail that the couple applied to the rest of the property. "It looks natural, but it's all planned," Lincke explains. 6 ARK JOURNAL VOL III

a former GDR harbor police station, retaining a vast brick wall and entrance

to the former dockyard building and creating a wild garden amongst the ruins.







"Through Franz, I rediscovered spontaneity and the reason I started making art in the beginning, to work fast and when you have an idea, to make the work very quickly, without caring how it looks," Reyle says. This newfound approach led him towards his large-scale sculptural ceramic works, which reinterpret the typical German Fat Lava style ceramics of the 70s. "You don't know what will come out

König are all following Reyle and Lincke's lead. appeals, rather than the rising buzz in the neighbourhood. of the Spree and a single exit light flashes on over an empty doorway His ensuing three-year collaboration with West, before the Austrian in the midst of the ruins. It's hard to imagine this scene playing out anywhere other than in Berlin.

WHEN

PERFECTLY

BALANCED.

still plugged into a socket swings aimlessly in the wind. During construction, a builder operating a hoist lifted Reyle to the top of the wall being demolished. Brandishing a paintbrush and can of white paint, he outlined where the wall had to be demolished as Lincke stood below directing him. She points to squiggles of paint on the wall. "Those are the outlines where we thought, 'Oh no, another 20 centimetres'," she says, both of them laughing. "It was a long process, it was sculptural work," Reyle adds. After visiting the High Line in New York, Lincke and Reyle abandoned their previous landscaping plans in favour of rewilding the property, juxtaposing long grasses and local foliage with patches of gravel. Several piles of concrete were pulled up from the ground and stacked haphazardly, inspired, says Reyle, by Caspar David Friedrich's painting Das Eismeer from 1823 in which shards of ice are piled up around a shipwreck. "The grass is planted in a very geometrical way," Lincke says. "We

"We built a lot of models to decide what should remain and what

should be pulled down." The focal point is the vast white brick wall

and entrance to the former dockyard building that frames a view

of the Spree. Large metal structures inside the former space are

where boats were lifted up during repairs. An electric cable that's

ATTENTION

wanted to have this wild feeling, but in a curated way. You always have to find a balance." Just don't call it a garden. "You couldn't even find a place to plant potatoes if you wanted to. It's simply a space where you can feel the changing of the seasons," she says. Sumac trees and birches, which often are the first species to grow in former industrial landscapes, were planted to evoke this atmosphere while flowers in varying shades of soft whites, pinks and violets bloom throughout the summer. "But no reds or yellow otherwise it would look too colourful," says Lincke. Reyle interjects, laughing, "I would have done all the colours."

That juxtaposition, between Reyle's ebullient maximalism and Lincke's affinity for the raw beauty of functional materiality, defines their home and its surroundings. "Our tastes are contrary, which is perhaps good," Reyle says. Lincke adds: "But when we do things together, it's perfectly balanced. We understand each other. It's never a compromise." As Reyle points out, "When you always compromise, it gets boring." Pointing to a whimsical, circular sofa covered in mustard yellow and bright pink mohair velvet, he says, "if we had ARK JOURNAL 9

metre high ceiling and made the house two or three floors. But Tanja said, 'No, this will be a monster, it won't feel like home." Lincke is clear about the principles she instilled into the house. "It's so important that you can still feel the ceiling. We are not in a castle. Everything is related to the proportion of a human being." That's reflected in the strong window frames that ground the space without overpowering it and in the large bookshelf that breaks up the vast open space inspired by Reyle's grandmother. "My oma had a setzkasten, it's like a cabinet of curiosities that older people in southern Germany have for tiny figurines," Reyle says. "That was the idea, but just in a bigger size." It houses an eclectic mixture that is routinely swapped around. For now there is a painting from Don Van Vliet, the musician and artist known as Captain Beefheart, artworks from Reyle's favourite artists Peter Halley and Steven Parrino, his collaborator Franz West as well as student works from the painting class he teaches in Hamburg, with some flea market finds and airport souvenirs thrown in for good measure. Most evenings, the whole family ends up gathered around the long wooden dining table constructed from roughly hewn planks of wood from one of the large trees that stood where the house is sited. The table is overlooked by one of West's brightly coloured paper mâché sculptures: "Everything happens here around this table," Lincke says, running her hands over the unvarnished wood. "I think this is so important, that you show the material, that you are not shy about doing this. We didn't varnish this table, so it really feels like wood. You can see how it's been used. It's important to allow things to change and not to try to keep it as it was on the first day." This is evident in her architectural practice more broadly. "When I renovated these buildings, I learned that it's important not to paint the walls with a new colour but just to keep the old walls. Otherwise it's like a person who gets facelifts and Botox all the time; it looks unnatural and so ugly," she says. "But if you allow a material to age, then it will look better and better."

compromised, we would have left the shape, but done it in grey.

That would not be the solution. It's better to try to understand each

"I learned from Anselm not to be afraid of colour," Lincke says.

"Architects are often afraid of colour, or they do too much colour."

Reyle confesses, "And if it was up to me, I would have built a five-

other, and to bring very different things together."



IT'S

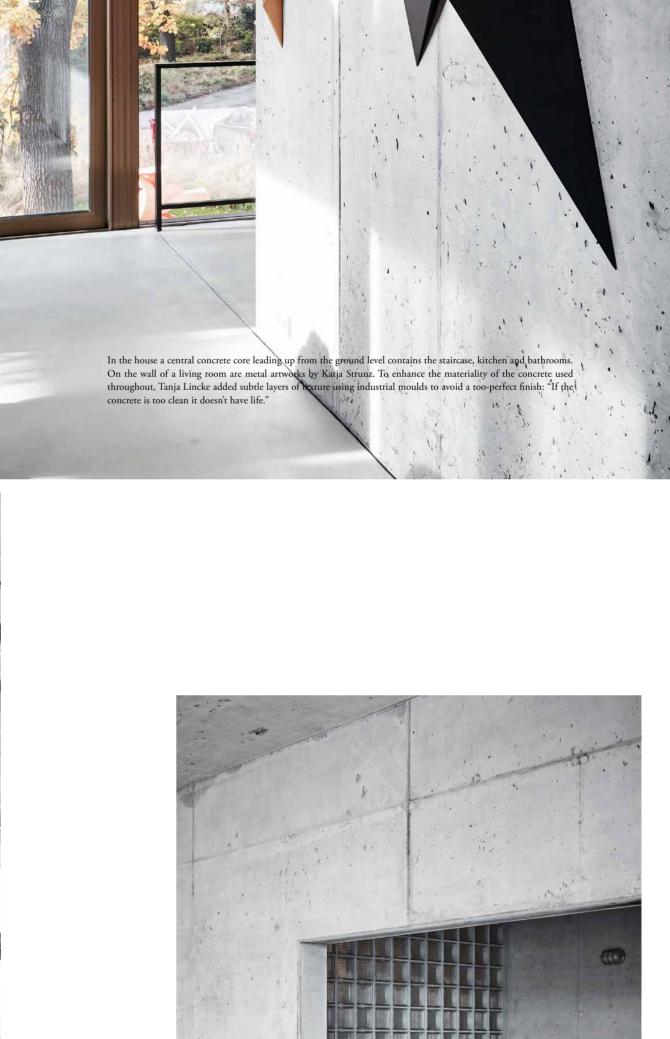
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The glass bricks in the kitchen allow light to penetrate the long narrow core and reference those used in the old water police boathouse. Opposite: Franz West's brightly-coloured paper mâché sculpture Die Frucht des Frusts, 2007 presides over the dining room where there is a large table made of wood from trees that stood where the house is sited. Around the table are Louis XVI-style chairs covered in a camouflage print that Anselm Reyle designed for Dior in 2011. The lights were formerly installed at the GDR's Palast der Republik in Berlin. The curtains were designed by Tanja Lincke

and Anselm Reyle and printed by Kvadrat.





