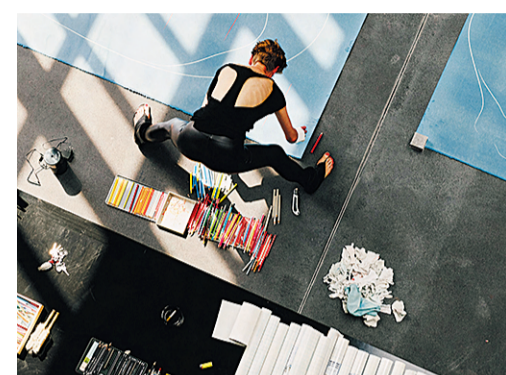


Arena

HIGHLIGHTS FROM T MAGAZINE.COM



CREATIVE HAVENS

Artistic Nooks

Thirty years ago, when the Berlin Wall came down, the city was left with huge swaths of empty buildings in the former East: old German Democratic Republic embassies and factory complexes, some still full of toxic waste. It was both a daunting and heady opportunity for Berlin to reinvent itself and start over. Artists and musicians moved into abandoned breweries, warehouses and basements and slowly brought new life to neighborhoods like Mitte, Prenzlauer Berg and Pankow. But now, Berlin's gentrified areas have become too expensive for many artists, and people have begun to move to farther-flung corners. Three such neighborhoods are the once-industrial areas of Treptow-Köpenick, Rummelsburg and Oberschöneweide, where some of Berlin's pioneering artists occupy former industrial buildings

along the Spree River. Although the area's landscape may look post-apocalyptic, with its giant weeds and empty power plants, strangely, the future there can seem positively Arcadian: Real estate is still cheap enough that artists are able to buy, rather than rent, their spaces.

Before the artist Tomás Saraceno bought a two-building chemical factory complex on a brownfield site in Rummelsburg in 2014, he had a company test the area for toxins. Their report suggested that while people could work on the plot, they shouldn't grow plants because an apple tree would only bear toxic fruit. "We have a mountain of poisonous earth in the courtyard now; should we pack it up in small glass containers like Piero Manzoni to make a comment on the link between art production and human production?"

wonders Mr. Saraceno, who has earned acclaim for his interactive architectural installations and sculptures of floating webs, entangled spheres and geodesic plexiglass and glass domes.

Within this studio's two four-story buildings, Mr. Saraceno, who originally trained as an architect, has created multiple spaces that correspond to his diverse interests, which range from astrophysics to arachnology. He dedicates one floor to the making of his solar-powered sculptures, another to his Cloud Cities sculptures, and an entire wing of one floor to his Arachnid Research Laboratory, where hundreds of spiders spin webs in large glass tanks. Mr. Saraceno imagines a day when humans will be able to gain knowledge from spiders and their habitats, and has created weblike sculptures using the threads

of different species strung across carbon frames. Having the freedom to work and carry out research in such a sprawling space of his own design — "a universe of dust and spider webs," as he calls it — is crucial to the vast imaginative scope of his work. For more creative Berlin residents, including the architect Tanja Lincke and the artist Anselm Reyle (top left) and the artist Jorinde Voigt (above right), tmagazine.com.

GISELA WILLIAMS



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FLORA HANTELIO/KIM GORDON; ROBERT FRIEDER (OPPOSITE ARTIST)



MY FAVORITE SONG

Kim Gordon on Neil Young

The idea of heading west has become a kind of shorthand for the search for better things. In the '60s, the musician Neil Young felt the pull and made the trek from Winnipeg, Manitoba, to Los Angeles, where his immersion in the Laurel Canyon folk scene jump-started his career. Around the same time, a teenage Kim Gordon was living in comparatively suburban West Los Angeles, longing for life in the canyons where the music "represented this very free and dreamy lifestyle," she says.

Ms. Gordon spent most of her adult life on the East Coast — and co-founded the rock band Sonic Youth in New York in 1981 — but moved back to Los Angeles in 2015. She has just released her debut solo album, "No Home Record," a subversive, post-punk ode to the city that shaped much of Mr. Young's

art. To mark the occasion, we asked her to participate in our video series "My Favorite Song," and she chose to discuss "On the Beach," the title track from Mr. Young's 1974 album. And Ms. Gordon has discovered a new affinity for the song. With lyrics like "I need a crowd of people/But I can't face them day to day," Mr. Young explored the isolation that came with fame. "It's interesting how shy people, including myself, in a performance situation are able to open themselves up more," Ms. Gordon says. And an observation Mr. Young once shared has helped her find her distinctive style: "One thing he said about singing — that it doesn't matter how good your voice is, as long as it's authentic — gave me a lot of courage and made me think about it in a different way." DANIEL WAGNER

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