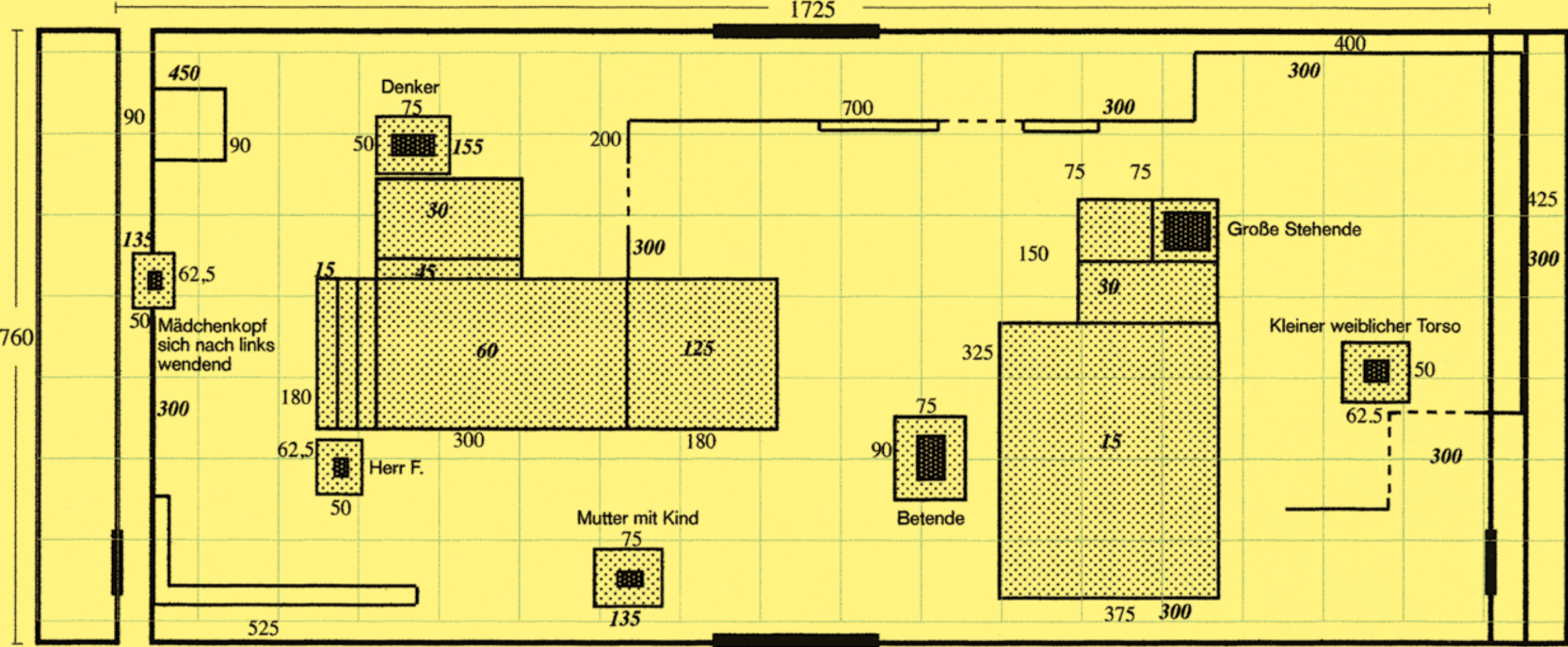


# LOST IN SPACE /2

Franka Hörnschemeyer  
PSE 900

Hrsg./ Ed. Nina Schallenberg

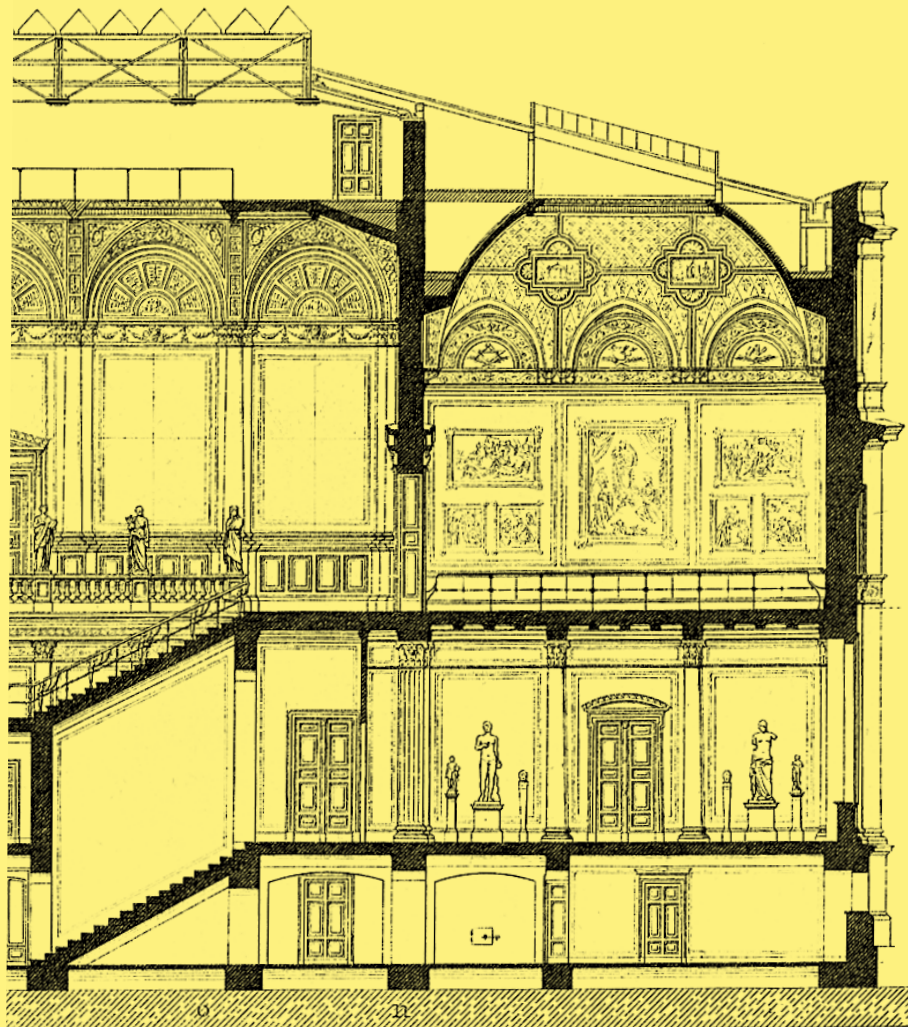
12-13  
Grundrissplan von PSE 900  
Floor plan of PSE 900  
2000



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Schnitt durch den Altbau  
der Hamburger Kunsthalle  
Cross-section of the old  
building of the Hamburger  
Kunsthalle  
1868  
(Detail)

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## The Disappearance of What is There

Dietmar Rübel

*Hornstrumpet! We shall not have succeeded in demolishing anything unless we demolish the ruins as well! But the only way I can see of doing that is to use them to put up a lot of fine, well-designed buildings.*

Alfred Jarry, *Ubu Enchained*, 1900

The Lehmbruck Room of the Hamburger Kunsthalle elicited consternation in many of those who visited it between 2000 and 2006. Entering from the stairwell of the old building, recently returned to its former glory, on parquet flooring that no longer creaked at every step, they found themselves in a room that to some seemed more akin to a building site than a gallery. The ceiling and two walls had been stripped down to their skeletal frames, laying bare previously hidden power lines, heating and ventilating systems; and then there were the formwork elements made of scratched and rusty steel erected inside the room itself. Mounted on plinths and pedestals amid this geometric rigor, which nevertheless had the look of a temporarily abandoned building or renovation project, were the seven sculptures by Wilhelm Lehmbruck.

The dismantling had been done by Franka Hörnschemeyer, who after taking the room apart had used its individual components, among them Lehmbruck's sculptures, as base materials for a complex new space-time fabric. The artist had also removed a false ceiling made of milk glass, thus readmitting the natural light from the glass roof that had illuminated the 19.5 m x 7.6 m room from the Kunsthalle's open-

ing in 1869 right up to the 1950s. These interventions exposed the substructure of the room, opening up a space several meters high above the intersecting steel crossties installed to support the false ceiling and hidden for decades. All the absurd-looking additions and modifications of the past fifty years, among them the metal frames supporting the stud walls mounted in front of the historical brickwork and the tiny, closet-like, chair stores could be seen for what they were. What came to light was the history of an exhibition space from the end of World War II onwards—a space whose historical accretions and the imprint of decades of use were now drawing attention to the underlying structures of the Hamburger Kunsthalle's founding building. The artist had also installed various elements of her own making such as steps, platforms, doorways, and a "chimney,"<sup>1</sup> so that visitors could experience alternative arrangements of the room. The formwork, consisting of several iron modules bolted together which in the building industry are used for casting concrete, showed clear signs of wear. Especially fascinating was the way the formwork elements that Hörnschemeyer used as partitions seemed to switch back and forth between positive form and negative die. What had happened was that certain materials and monumental tools had been requisitioned and repurposed so as to lend the supposedly purposeless art of Classical Modernism new scope for development.

The title of the work, *PSE 900*, underscored its ties to the categories of space and time: "P" stands for Paschal, the name of the company that makes the

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formwork (called *Schalelemente*, or SE in German), and “900” for the date of the piece in September (9) of the year 2000 (00). Taking the historical corpus of the late nineteenth century, which after World War II was modified and remodeled, as her starting point, the artist used the intersecting axes and grids by which the room was defined to conceive an architectural sculpture that at the same time would serve as a display for Lehmbruck’s sculptures. The aim of the piece is perhaps best understood as the capture and communication of the material, local, and historical conditions of art in a walk-in, space-thing-composite. With its metal ties and formwork, *PSE 900* also evokes the discovery of “space” as a category in architecture, a concept that architecture and architectural theory had managed without right up to the end of the nineteenth century. Only when steel frames began to replace walls made of masonry in the 1890s did people begin wondering what might be hidden *between* the walls, the ceiling, and the floor.<sup>2</sup> Hörschemeyer marked the discovery of space as a historical frontier with *PSE 900*, a chronotopos that incorporates the story of how the exhibition space, and hence the Kunsthalle itself, was built, and by doing so explores what is essentially a fusion of spatial and temporal attributes.

The installation, which alternates between solid building and display, was frequently mentioned in the same breath as Institutional Critique; but that is only one aspect of the work.<sup>3</sup> Above and beyond this, the restaging of Lehmbruck’s sculptures recalls the rediscovery of this artist in post-1945 West Ger-

many, his figures having been deliberately exposed to ridicule and attack in the Nazis’ notorious *Entartete Kunst* (Degenerate Art) exhibition of 1937. Displayed in huge letters behind close to his *Kneeling Woman* of 1911 at that show in Munich’s Hofgarten were the words “They had four years’ time,” which is a reference to Hitler’s first speech as Reichskanzler on February 10, 1933. This was the scenario that Arnold Bode referenced in a presentation of the same work in the spectacular setting of the hastily repaired rotunda of the Fridericianum Museum in Kassel at the first Documenta in 1955. *PSE 900* thus relates not just the local history of the Hamburger Kunsthalle and the presentation of its collection, but also, more generally, the history of the “museumization” of modern and contemporary art from the first tentative purchases of Early Modernism to its rehabilitation in West Germany after 1945 and the integration of ephemeral works created in the last few decades.

The opposition that Hörschemeyer’s work met with among some Hamburg museum-goers may have grown out of two crucial changes at the Hamburger Kunsthalle undertaken during the 1990s, specifically the opening of the new wing designed by Oswald M. Ungers in 1997 and the restoration of the historical stairwell of the original building. To many visitors to the Lehmbruck Room, it was as if the new millennium had begun much as the old one had ended—with a building site. There was no glamour, no ostentatious display of masterpieces of Classical Modernism; what awaited visitors instead was a makeshift assemblage of building materials

seemingly installed for all eternity. There had been no shortage of building projects between 1992 and 1995. In fact, one of the first measures initiated by Uwe M. Schneede when he took over as director of the Kunsthalle in 1991—besides installing the Lehmbruck Room that same year—was the restoration of the historical décor adorning the walls of the stairwell and the reconstruction of the original interior design of Georg Theodor Schirrmacher and Hermann von Hude. Back in 1949, Schneede’s predecessor Carl Georg Heise had had the allegorical paintings of Valentin Ruth and Arthur Fitger removed and the lavish ornaments painted over in monochrome gray. With the devastation of World War II still fresh in everyone’s memories, the paintings’ late nineteenth-century iconographic program with its notion of history as cyclical in much the same way that nature is cyclical must have seemed painfully obsolete. This part of the old building, moreover, had been used to present those very same works of Classical Modernism that the Nazis had derided as “degenerate.” It was in the course of the 1950s remodeling of the building that the monumental Lehmbruck Room was turned into a white and gray box fitted with a false ceiling made of milk glass. The only visible reminder of the iconoclasm of the postwar period today is a thin stripe of gray paint in the stairwell. That *PSE 900*, installed amid the historicist splendors of the post-unification period, should have sparked a flashback to the makeshift dullness of the Cold War era is thus not surprising. Besides, the collection of the Kunsthalle had had to

be reorganized following the opening of the new contemporary wing, the Galerie der Gegenwart, in 1997. Contemporary art now had a home of its own; which is another reason why Hörschemeyer’s arrangement seemed so provocative: Surely now the Classical Modernists in the old building should have premises befitting their works?

The questions raised by *PSE 900* thus turn on far more than Institutional Critique alone: They inquire into the cultural conditions and restrictions at work in art institutions, as well as into how works of art are kept and cared for, and, in particular, the (im)possibility of preserving works that are by nature ephemeral in a museum. After all, Hörschemeyer’s installation presented a room in a state of transition right from the start. Her artificial ruin, as it were, ran counter to the traditionally understood mission of a state-run museum as an institution that vouches for permanence, even if it has to be permanently rearranged. With its rusty old steel elements and encrusted metal ties brought to light by the dismantling of the plasterboard wall cladding, the installation recalled the remains of a building left to go to ruin. What Hörschemeyer did was to visualize the timelessness of museum presentations as an elaborately concealed ideology and to provide art with a permanently provisional home.

Robert Smithson, for whom architectural complexes and “non-sites” where entropic processes become visible held a special fascination, gave a lecture in 1972 in which he called on students of architecture to concentrate on states of transition. Three

years previously, he had visited the Maya temples of Yucatán together with his wife, the artist Nancy Holt, and his gallerist Virginia Dwan. In his slide show, however, Smithson chose to talk not of the glorious past of a long lost civilization, but about a shabby, run-down hotel in Palenque, the provincial town where he and his traveling companions happened to land when they arrived in Mexico for their expedition. What had caught his attention was the hotel's layered quality, its non-existent center, and the absence of any overriding logic:

"There you see where the stairs just completely fall away and you have these uninhabited old motel sections, and once again you get a better idea of the careful way that they don't tear everything down all in one fell swoop. It's done slowly with a certain degree of sensitivity and grace so that there is time for the foliage to grow through the broken concrete, and there is time for the various colors on the wall to mellow under the sun. So you get this kind of really sensuous sense of something extending both in and out of time, something that doesn't belong to the earth and really something that is rooted very much into the earth. This kind of de-architecturization pervades the entire structure. And you have to remember that it's a-centric, no focuses, nothing to grip onto, no certainty, everything is completely random, and done to please somebody's everyday activity."<sup>4</sup>

The architectural ideal that Robert Smithson devel-

ops in this associative analysis is both building site and ruin rolled into one; the past intersects with the present and grows into the future.<sup>5</sup>

Franka Hörschemeyer also links present and past in *PSE 900*; her work certainly relates to the room in the museum surrounding it, but at the same time it is detached from it. What makes *PSE 900* so radical is the way it exposes modern art's contradictory *Zeitkern*, or time capsule, and allows transitions between permanence and the here and now to be observed.<sup>6</sup> The installation can therefore be understood not just as an artificial ruin that recalls the ephemeral nature of all things made by humans, but also as an indefinite space that opens up alternative perspectives on art. Hörschemeyer's Lehmbruck Room installation, in other words, is a place where processes of transition can be experienced. By exposing an architectural space to time, the museum can be turned into the scene of a different narrative. *PSE 900* gives the lie to the notion that museums generate dignity, and by doing so it places the Hamburger Kunsthalle on this side of history, not beyond it. The ideological divide separating the museum as an art institution from the outside world is rendered fascinatingly permeable, mainly because without ever becoming merely a room in a room, the complex installation enables visitors to view a historically evolved ensemble from a range of different perspectives. It opens up places of transition—spaces behind walls, doors, and ceilings, beyond thresholds, platforms, and cornices—that lead to the resolution of any putative contradiction between inside and out. The relationship between

subject and object, between viewer and sculpture, thus has to be renegotiated. The layering of the room greatly enhances the potential for sensory experience on the part of the visitor so that Lehmbruck's sculptures, in particular, can be seen in a way that is different and new. Spaces and sculptures constitute neither representations nor symbols for Hörschemeyer; indeed, they are not immaterial vehicles at all, since it is the sensory qualities of her work that make our perception of it a physical experience for us to ponder. The different viewing heights afforded by the platforms installed in the room allow Lehmbruck's *Praying Woman* of 1918, for example, to oscillate between idol, sculptural experiment, and skeletal abstraction.

The Hamburger Kunsthalle's purchase of *PSE 900* in 2005 led shortly afterwards to its removal. In 2006, just one year after the work had become part of the museum's collection, it disappeared into the vaults. The Lehmbruck Room itself was then remodeled as part of the full-scale restoration of the old building. The fate of *PSE 900* points up a general problem with how museums and other cultural institutions handle change. In his research project *Cronocao*s of 2010, Rem Koolhaas showed that UNESCO and its ilk have already declared twelve percent of the Earth's surface worthy of protection. Often, so the tenor of Koolhaas's critique, the windfall funding that follows in the wake of such declarations has the effect of turning places into "glorified open-air museums."<sup>7</sup> Living buildings and urban ensembles, in other words, are replaced by a conserved utopia and with it an ideology that negates all sense of time. It is above all the

materiality of the elements that make up *PSE 900*, all those many signs of wear and tear, that offer an escape route from the descent into cultural theme park as the fate that now awaits not only countless cities, but also architectural ensembles and individual buildings like the Hamburger Kunsthalle, the Alte Museum zu Berlin, and the Dresdner Schloss. The power of culture is domesticated—temporarily negated, in fact—in the explicit rawness of the platform and wall constructions that are *PSE 900*.

Thus Hörschemeyer engages with the needs of a society in the throes of change. No longer are permanent values (and works) created for flexible consumer society—only site- and time-specific experiences of material and space. Such works of art must be experienced and thus make the claims to immortality of all previous works of art look antiquated. Until 2006, *PSE 900* could be viewed not only as an artificial ruin, but also as a building site. But the Kunsthalle is governed by a very different temporal regime from that prevailing behind the hoardings.<sup>8</sup> Building sites are temporary spaces in which efficiency holds sway, and time is in short supply. For this reason, too, *PSE 900* has a lot to teach us about time—both inside and outside the museum.

In 1926, Louis Aragon called for "sanctuaries of a cult of the ephemeral" for the permanently changing modern world of his novel *Paris Peasant*; what he had in mind were places for the heightened awareness and worship of things either forgotten or rapidly disappearing.<sup>9</sup> This strategy of preservation and remembrance led other artists to discover the

26 “revolutionary energies that appear in the ‘outmoded,’” as Walter Benjamin wrote of Surrealism.<sup>10</sup> Conserved in such sanctuaries, the popular world of things would outlive the aging and obsolescence to which modernity had doomed it. That Aragon should have called for a home for the objects of modern life is surprising, bearing in mind that the avant-garde regarded its own works as timeless, or at any rate as a fresh start beyond the bounds of traditional art history. Wilhelm Lehmbruck’s own works were appreciated specifically for their supposedly “archaic” language of forms, which allowed them to be perceived as art before art. Hörschemeyer’s engagement with the pathos of modernity, which *PSE 900* incorporates in the form of the Lehmbruck sculptures as a genuinely historical item, appears to uphold, and at the same time transcend, the central promise of high culture, which is that on entering a museum, time stands still. One of the great strengths of her works is that they are perceived as foreign bodies, which as Stefan Germer once remarked “cannot belong permanently to the rooms in which they stand, but at the very most temporarily structure and interpret them.”<sup>11</sup> Perhaps it is here that the epistemic turn of the last decade is most apparent: Art today must be mutable. But is *PSE 900* really art that does not seek to endure? Or to put it another way: Is the artist on the side of those who storm museums or those who found them?

Meanwhile, the promise of transience seems no less worthy of attention and acclaim than that of permanence. But if the value of art no longer

resides in capturing enduring forms in immutable materials, it follows that mutable art is at its most valuable when the concrete objects disappear. This paradox underlying the museumization of mutable installations and ephemeral works of art has been gaining potency ever since the 1960s. And ever since 1997, when the Hamburger Kunsthalle opened its Galerie der Gegenwart, a new wing devoted to contemporary art produced since 1960, it has faced the problems raised by this paradox head on. Assembled in the galleries of the semi-basement are examples of European and American Post-Minimalism, whose positions Hörschemeyer references.<sup>12</sup> The largest room with works strewn all over the floor recalled the Bernese exhibition “When Attitudes Become Form” of 1969. It showed site- and time-specific works created in opposition to the traditional art business being museumized, in many cases in defiance of their original conception. The artists of the next generation were therefore invited to install rooms of their own in hopes of initiating a critical dialogue with the museumization of what some have described as the “anti-art” of the 1960s and 1970s. The crucial question was how works of art that are by nature ephemeral could be collected and preserved. One way of preserving them, and the method adopted by the Hamburger Kunsthalle’s Galerie der Gegenwart, was to create a “remake” of a work conceived as temporary. Since the 1990s, this strategy has become widespread among artists, curators, and conservators, and as a quasi-religious staging of the auratic remains of the production

process has taken its place in the vitrines in lieu of or alongside the traditional plaster or bronze cast. The most monumental example of this, and the one which by virtue of its conception has proved the most influential for the Galerie der Gegenwart, is Richard Serra’s *Measurements of Time (Seeing Is Believing)*, a “splashing” of molten lead, which the new wing was remodeled to accommodate even before it opened.<sup>13</sup> In March 1996, the artist had the doorway to a room on the main axis of the semi-basement walled up in preparation for the work he planned to install there. The effect of this was to interrupt the rigorously hierarchic order of the suite of rooms in the new wing designed by Oswald M. Ungers. Whereas Serra’s early “splashings” of the late 1960s had been temporary works that were later removed, the one in Hamburg created nearly thirty years later is destined for institutional perpetuity, if only because one of the five lead elements was burned into the gallery floor. *Measurements of Time* thus forfeits much of the radicalism of the earlier works in the group, while at the same time opening up a new field of inquiry: the temporal depth of the museum.

This form of the museumization of the art of the 1960s was apparently too conventional for some employees of the Kunsthalle. In the year 2000, therefore, numerous artists—among them Franka Hörschemeyer—were invited to contribute a critical engagement with the museum as institution for the exhibition “Ein|räumen: Arbeiten im Museum.”<sup>14</sup> As the curator responsible for “Ein|räumen,” Frank Barth and his team developed a concept which,<sup>15</sup> after—or

perhaps because of—the interventions by Richard Serra and other artists of the 1968 generation, made the Hamburger Kunsthalle look like a museum that was performing its most ancient function: It had become a tomb, a place where artifacts were gathered for eternity as vehicles of immortality. Exhibited alongside the temporary interventions, the works installed permanently in the Galerie der Gegenwart began to look like stuffed animals in display cases—a diorama of neo-avant-gardists from a past century.

The presentation of artifacts and works of art in museums since the late 1960s has been shaped by the notion that the cultural, social, and aesthetic resonances that such exhibits accrue over time—or indeed evoke—deserve to be rescued from oblivion and rendered visible. The museum these days is becoming less and less a place in which to hoard immortal works of art—its most ancient function—and is mutating into an arena for the staging of spectacular acts of revelation, which demonstrate to visitors that works of art do not stand still. The hope that objects themselves retain a certain potency as complex webs of relations extending far beyond their material presence alone rests on the conviction, widely shared since the beginning of the twentieth century, that material fragments do indeed allow the totality of a lost world to be brought back to life. The purpose of restaging the past in this way is to enable visitors to identify those practices in which the exhibits were once enshrined. This, however, entails a mystification of an artistic process, which for those who collect and exhibit what remains of it is reliant on the power of the exhibition space, or what



28 Brian O'Doherty once called the "unique chamber of esthetics."<sup>16</sup> What this also makes clear is that temporary exhibition and permanent collection are increasingly joining forces to become a meta-space for art.<sup>17</sup> As the history of *PSE 900* shows, however, the "success" of a work of art depends not just on its institutional afterlife and survival, but also on its discursive circulation. For even objects obey the law of survival, what Jacques Derrida called "living on": "the very progression that belongs, without belonging, to the progression of life and death." The survival of things, in other words, is a complex transmission process, in the course of which heterogeneous materials and media interpenetrate, giving rise to a "narrative formed out of traces, writing, distance, teleo-graphy."<sup>18</sup>

Art itself has transformed the exhibition space—as the work of Franka Hörnschemeyer and its destructive museumization proves—from tomb to temple to neutral box to a kind of laboratory. If the exhibition space, understood as a white cube, is outside time, as ideally it should be, then *PSE 900* demonstrates a time that is both palpable and impermanent.

- 1 This is the term used by Franka Hörnschemeyer herself, see p. 44 in this publication.
- 2 Cf. Wolfgang Kemp, "Der architektonische Raum," in idem, *Architektur analysieren: Eine Einführung in acht Kapiteln*, Munich: Schirmer/Mosel, 2009, 115–166, esp. 116 ff.
- 3 See, for example, Beatrice von Bismarck, "Spielräume im Eingeräumten," in *Franka Hörnschemeyer: Nr. 109*, exh. cat. Hamburger Bahnhof, Museum für Gegenwart – Berlin, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Berlin, Cologne: Walther König, 2002, 6–15; Nina Gülicher, "'Maß gegen Maß': Über 'PSE 900' von Franka Hörnschemeyer, Hamburger Kunsthalle," in *Etwas von Etwas: Abstrakte Kunst* (Jahresring 52), ed. Friedrich Meschede, Cologne: Walther König, 2005, 137–147.
- 4 Robert Smithson, "Hotel Palenque, 1969–72", lecture given at the University of Utah in 1972, first published in *Parkett*, no. 43, 1995, 117–132, 126.
- 5 On ruins, cf. Kai Vöckler, *Die Architektur der Abwesenheit: Über die Kunst, eine Ruine zu bauen*, Berlin: Parthas, 2009.
- 6 On ephemeral works of art, cf. Dietmar Rübel, *Plastizität: Eine Kunstgeschichte des*

- Veränderlichen*, Munich: Silke Schreiber, 2012, esp. the chapter "Die Musealisierung des Ephemereren," 268–305.
- 7 Niklas Maak, "Welterbe Moderne," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 27, 2011; see also [www.oma.eu/projects/2010/venice-biennale-2010-cronoacos](http://www.oma.eu/projects/2010/venice-biennale-2010-cronoacos) (accessed on October 1, 2014).
- 8 Cf. Hartmut Böhme, "Baustelle ist überall: Phantasma und Kultur eines Phänomens," in *Neue Zürcher Zeitung*, December 8, 2012, 29.
- 9 Louis Aragon, *Paris Peasant* (1926), trans. Simon Watson Taylor, London: Jonathan Cape, 29.
- 10 Walter Benjamin, "Surrealism: The Last Snapshot of the European Intelligentsia" (1929), trans. Edmund Jephcott, in *Selected Writings*, Volume 2: 1927–1930, ed. Michael W. Jennings et al., Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999, 210.
- 11 Stefan Germer, "Ortsbestimmung," in *Franka Hörnschemeyer*, exh. cat. Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, Berlin: Karl-Schmidt-Rottluff-Förderstiftung, 1995, unpag.
- 12 Cf. Hubertus Butin, *Franka Hörnschemeyer*, Cologne: self-published, 2006, 34–36.
- 13 Cf. Olaf Pascheit and Dietmar Rübel,

- Richard Serra in der Hamburger Kunsthalle*, ed. Uwe M. Schneede, Hamburg: Hamburger Kunsthalle, 2003.
- 14 *PSE 900* seeks a unity of work and space, in other words a sculpture space or space sculpture, such as the Kunsthalle's then director Uwe M. Schneede was promoting. See Uwe M. Schneede, *Skulptur-Räume: Die jungen Deutschen der achtziger Jahre*, Regensburg: Lindinger und Schmid, 1997.
- 15 On the concept of the exhibition, see *Einräumen: Arbeiten im Museum*, exh. cat. Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg; Ostfildern-Ruit: Hatje Cantz, 2000.
- 16 Brian O'Doherty, "Inside the White Cube: Notes on the Gallery Space" (1976), in *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space*, San Francisco: Lapis Press, 1986, 14.
- 17 Cf. Stephen Bann, "History as Competence and Performance: Notes on the Ironic Museum," in *A New Philosophy of History*, ed. Frank Ankersmit and Hans Kellner, London: Reaktion Books, 1995, 195–211.
- 18 Jacques Derrida, "Living On: Border Lines," trans. James Hulbert, in Harold Bloom et al., *Deconstruction and Criticism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1979, 135–136.

29–36  
*PSE 900*  
 sämtliche Bestandteile des  
 Lehmbruck-Saals, Schalelemente  
 All components of the Lehmbruck  
 Room, formwork elements  
 ca. / c. 10.00 × 19.50 × 7.60 m  
 Hamburger Kunsthalle, Hamburg  
 Oktober / October 2000 –  
 Januar / January 2006

