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## **On Berlin's Palace of the Republic—a New, Transitory Ruin Motif in Contemporary Art?<sup>1</sup>**

This article considers the term "ruin" with regard to images of man-made destruction of architecture. It particularly focuses on post-war architecture and, more specifically, on the controversy surrounding the dismantling<sup>2</sup> of Berlin's Palace of the Republic (1976). What, it will be asked, is the role of images and artworks in this context?

Images of ruins are the main subject of a trans-disciplinary anthology by Aleida Assmann, Monika Gomille and Gabriele Rippl<sup>3</sup> published in 2002 – one year after the attacks on the World Trade Center. Since the attacks, they write in their introduction, ruins have become an alarmingly explosive subject. They attribute this in large part to the imposing *images* that have been conveyed of the 9/11 incident, which have been "burned into the collective memory of mankind" via extensive news coverage of the event.<sup>4</sup> While this is undeniable, it is interesting that the authors describe images of the attacked Twin Towers as prime examples of "ruin" pictures. The force and velocity of the destruction caused by the attacks seems opposed to the picturesque decay usually associated with depictions of ruin. The towers were shown either as mostly intact, excluding the upper third, or in the process of collapse, before, finally, they were documented as piles of debris, with the remains of architect Minoru Yamasaki's now famous steel columns sticking out. Do these photographs and videos depict "ruins"? Up to what point is this a valid term? The authors go on to clarify by referring to the Twin Towers as "transitory ruins".<sup>5</sup> Transitory means short-lived, and thus seems to be a more applicable term for the destructive process. But the question remains: is the term "ruin" appropriate when it comes to man-made destruction of architecture, be it by attack, demolition or dismantling – processes often found in contemporary images of modern or post-war architecture?

The art critic Brian Dillon also cites the World Trade Center attacks as the main

backdrop for what he calls a "flourishing" of images of catastrophe and decay in the realm of global events, popular culture and the work of visual artists in the last decade.<sup>6</sup> In the introduction to his edited volume about ruins in contemporary art, he specifies his definition of a ruin, which seems to contradict the usage of the term with regard to 9/11:

[i]ts decay is a concrete reminder of the passage of time. And yet by definition it survives, after a fashion: there must be a certain (perhaps indeterminate) amount of built structure still standing for us to refer to it as a ruin and not merely as a heap of rubble.<sup>7</sup>

In fact, one of the key characteristics of ruins seems to be a rather wondrous relation to time. French archaeologist Alain Schnapp argues that the Greek word for ruin, *ereipia*, is deducted from a word meaning "trace" or "remainder", ergo something residual from the past, but additionally, as Dillon mentioned, ruins are simultaneously a sign of persistence and a possible projection of endurance into the future. The Twin Towers and every other "transitory ruin" lack this aspect of endurance or "survival". It is, however, the "indeterminacy" that Dillon speaks of that might help to further investigate the subject matter. Perhaps it forms part of the definition of the "ruins" of post-war architecture?

Undoubtedly, Dillon's observation is accurate: there has been an increase in contemporary photography, film and video works that explore "the ruins of modernist architecture, the defunct infrastructure of the Cold War" and, one might add, their destruction. In the context of Germany's reunification process and the aftermath of the Cold War, it seems especially fascinating to contemplate relics from an obsolete former regime.<sup>8</sup> For Dillon, "this sense of having lived on too far, of having survived the collapse of past dreams of the future, is key to the ruinous optic that still animates certain artists today". But what if these signs of the collapse of past dreams collapse as well? This article explores the subject matter further using the example of one particular building, one that has lent itself as the subject of numerous artistic explorations on decay, removal and destruction: Berlin's Palace of the Republic. The Palace was one of the most significant buildings in the history of the former GDR—and one of its most famous relics after the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is thus hardly surprising that numerous artists have paid it homage in artistic works. This article will introduce three bodies of work that suggest three different states of

the building's destruction, ruinous or not.

## A Short History of the Palace: Parliament, Eyesore, Wasted Opportunity and Site of Memory

Designed by East German architect Heinz Graffunder and opened in 1976, the Palace of the Republic housed the People's Chamber—the political organ of East Germany—as well as various entertainment venues such as bowling alleys, restaurants and a multifunctional concert hall. For 14 years, it embodied an allegedly modern state that was declared to be of service "for the republic". After the fall of the Berlin Wall and shortly before the German reunification in 1990, the Palace was closed due to asbestos contamination. The presence of asbestos had been known, however, since the 1980s,<sup>9</sup> and surely was not the only reason for its subsequent abandonment and neglect. Architectural critic Bruno Flierl makes a good point by suggesting that another motive for the disuse of the Palace might have been the fears of its *ideological* contamination after the end of the GDR.<sup>10</sup> After eight years of lying idle, asbestos decontamination work eventually started, removing 5,000 tons of the carcinogenic concrete fiber between 1998 and 2003. This process was supposed to enable either a safe re- or de-construction of the Palace, whose fate was still unclear during the 1990s. It resulted in a run-down structure reduced to its core and supporting frame, which can undeniably be considered a form of man-made "ruination" of the building. In this state, however, the structure acquired yet another function, one rather typical for Berlin at the time: from 2003 on, artists and activists appropriated the large, empty building core and showcased its possible re-use as a cultural center by staging a large number of events and exhibitions there.<sup>11</sup> Despite this demonstrated range of possibilities, in 2003 the parliament of the reunited country voted for the Palace's complete disassembly and the eventual reconstruction of the Hohenzollern castle, which had occupied the same site until its demolition by the GDR in 1950. The historical and symbolic significance of both buildings and the planned reconstruction of the Prussian castle caused heated debates, which continue to polarize Berliners to this day. In these discussions, the Palace was alternately perceived as a symbol of a totalitarian regime, a site of positive individual memories or as an important historical artifact.<sup>12</sup> All of the participants in the debate, however, emphasized the building's high symbolic value. Consequently, in 2001, during the process of

asbestos removal, the editors of *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte* dedicated an article to the controversial edifice. Their compendium of German historical places, objects, institutions, individuals and phenomena, which condensed and preserved collective memory, was inspired by Pierre Nora's French *Lieux de mémoire*. The article about the Palace cements its function as a screen for various symbolic projections: from an "anti-imperialistic" symbol at the time of its construction, to a representation of the "idealized GDR", to "East-symbol" and "display window of Socialism" for West Berliners after the fall of the Wall.<sup>13</sup> Nonetheless, the remaining structure was eventually completely dismantled and removed between 2006 and 2008 to make space for the reconstruction of the Hohenzollern castle.<sup>14</sup> The extraordinary symbolic value of this process can surely be considered one of the main reasons for the high number of artistic endeavors regarding the Palace, three of which will be introduced in what follows.

### Desymbolization of the Palace in Sophie Calle's *The Detachment* (1996)

One of the photographs in the series *The Detachment* (1996) by French conceptual artist Sophie Calle shows a symmetric detail of the Palace's bronze glass façade. Its style, a glass grid combined with its supporting concrete elements, is clearly attributable to the functionalism of post-war architecture. While its metallic orange color is still stunning in places, the façade has visibly suffered from exposure to weather conditions over the years, and has lost its original splendor. At this point, the building had been empty and left to itself for six years. The decay is minor; there is, however, an empty, rusted metal frame whose roundness contrasts with the façade's rigid grid structure. A large metal version of the official GDR emblem had once been attached here—prominently above the entrance to the Palace. The emblem had adorned the Palace's façade until the GDR had ceased to exist, and its symbolism was no longer applicable in the unified country. It was therefore removed after the end of the GDR. But the frame, formerly supporting its solid metal wreath, hammer and compass, remained and quietly reminded passersby of Germany's politically changing landscape.



Sophie Calle, GDR Insignia (from the series *The Detachment*), 1996, photograph and book, courtesy Galerie Arndt

Calle's photograph is, above all, a picture of absence and neglect in a modernist building, in whose symmetry she finds beauty and in whose emptiness she finds political meaning. But her investigation goes further than to simply comment on the disappearance of a political symbol. A publication is installed underneath Calle's photograph, opened to a specific page. It quotes anonymous passersby whom Calle interviewed in front of the bronze glass façade with its missing metal emblem. The quotes explain its former symbolism—a hammer for the work force, dividers for intelligence, and a stalk of barley for peasants—or highlight the high symbolic character of its absence: "Of course, it was beautiful! What you could read into it, you can't read into our new order. As you see, it's empty now". Another person instead called it an "eyesore". Whether positive or negative, all the statements express a certain degree of emotional investment. "They tore it down with a crowbar. Now it's gone and with it perhaps the possibility of remembering".<sup>15</sup>

For her *Detachment* series, Calle scouted and photographed several sites in Berlin from which—six years after the reunification of East and West Germany—GDR monuments had already been removed: Obvious ones like the Lenin Statue at the Russian Embassy, but also smaller relics like the deserter's memorial plaque on Friedrichstraße.<sup>16</sup> Calle documented the remaining empty plinths or residual nails in walls. The particular agenda that was being practiced with regard to symbols of the GDR in public spaces after 1990 is summed up in an announcement by Berlin's Chamber of Deputies: "Whenever a system of rule dissolves or is overthrown, the justification for its monuments—at least those which served to legitimize and foster its rule—no longer exists".<sup>17</sup> The GDR's mostly figurative monuments therefore underwent a process of revision, and it can be assumed that many of them were removed in the hope that their physical detachment would also lead to an emotional detachment from the GDR. The fact that Calle depicts only this specific detail of the Palace suggests that her main interest lies here as well. It was not the beginning of the disused building's decay that interested her, but the larger problem connected to this disuse, the issue of *memory* with regard to political "iconoclasm"—be it towards objects or buildings. This is surely another lead for a discussion of destruction in artworks. Calle's work, however, is at the same time highly constructive by means of her recordings of passersby's memories. She suggests so herself by stating "I photographed the absence and replaced the missing monuments with their memories".<sup>18</sup> Effectively, Calle not only documents

a very specific situation of outdated political iconography in the newly unified Germany of the time and explores the context of the country's reunification process in the aftermath of the Cold War, her series also accentuates the fact that once a public monument has vanished from our sight, our picture of it is made up of collective, but also subjective memories of it, which might alter shape, meaning and purpose with the passing of time. Although its ruinous state might not be obvious at first sight, the disused Palace in her picture might be termed a "ruin". But more importantly, this photograph anticipates the urgent question: what happens to the memories triggered by objects of any kind, once these objects or buildings are removed or destroyed? The current situation at the Palace site underlines this importance: on June 12<sup>th</sup>, 2013 the foundation stone for the reconstruction of the former Hohenzollern castle was laid in the presence of President Joachim Gauck. The emptiness that had marked this site after the dismantling of the Palace, just like the empty frame had marked its façade for many years, is being overwritten. The quote of one of the anonymous passersby about the GDR emblem seems like a presentiment for the entire Palace of the Republic: "Now it's gone and with it perhaps the possibility of remembering". Is this the case?

### **Emptiness and the Possibility of Re-symbolization in Nina Fischer & Maroan el Sani's *PdR Weißbereich* (2001)**

The meaning of emptiness is also an integral part of a second series that will be discussed here. In 2001, while the decontamination team was removing the last asbestos traces from the Palace's roof, artist duo Nina Fischer & Maroan el Sani explored the remains of the façade and the void on the inside of the building. With the title *Weißbereich*, the artists stress their interest in the decontamination process: this technical term denominates an area that is already clean and safe.

While the notion of destroying the Palace was not yet a concern when Calle made her work in 1996, in Fischer & el Sani's series from 2001 it is clearly distinguishable. *Weißbereich* is a sort of inventory of the remaining structures. The series consists of drawings, a reconstruction of the typical hyacinth and coffee smell in the entrance hall, and—above all—of four panoramic photographs and two video-loops of a camera circumscribing the empty former Volkskammersaal (Hall of the People's Parliament).<sup>19</sup>

The reconstructed smell is an interesting addendum to the discussion of lost memories: along with the Palace's purpose, not only has its image changed, but also its smell (and sound, for that matter). To invoke the original smell is similar to asking passersby about their personal recollections: it triggers personal memories for those who have been there, and for those who haven't, the smell is like an invisible but constitutive part of the puzzle of the Palace. When Fischer & el Sani documented the Palace's status, every trace of its former usage had been



Nina Fischer & Maroan el Sani, *Palast der Republik - Weissbereich*, Production Still, 2001, copyright: VG Bildkunst and the Artists

removed. The smell of flowers and coffee evoked its past representative and entertainment functions and thus highlighted the contrast to the now eerie emptiness on the inside. With the camera close to the ground, the artists captured the wideness of the uncovered and rough concrete floor. Walls are nonexistent, except for the very outer shell of foggy glass windows. The rest looks like scaffolding. The red and white of the barrier tape and a green tinge in the remaining construction are the only colors; the rest is left in various hues of grey and brown. The most striking thing about these images is their emptiness.

Does that make the Palace a "ruin" in these pictures? They show, after all, the state in which the building has "survived" an extreme intervention. Deprived of all its decorum and exposed to its core, the structure has lost its function as a (representative) building, but it still displays valuable remains. However, when the artist duo photographed its interior, the fate of the Palace was still being discussed publicly. The seeming stability of its remains must therefore have been considered relative at the time. Maybe in these images, the Palace can be called a ruin. But it is a ruin whose fate is unclear: the wide open spaces, cleaned of asbestos and "ideological contamination", exhibit a vacuum that still bears the possibility of re-use, which would put an end to its ruinous status. In hindsight, albeit with the knowledge that this re-use was of short duration, the series almost appears a little hopeful, as if the barrier tape delineated, not a site of destruction, but one of construction.

In a conversation with Fischer & el Sani in 2008, discussing the almost complete Palace removal, philosopher and art critic Boris Groys stated that:

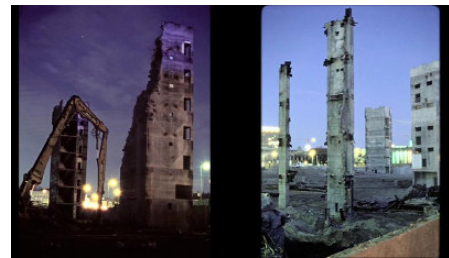


Within the terms of modernism, destruction is the best way to conserve. For we are living in a cultural environment, in which, on various levels, all destructions are documented, archived, interpreted and processed artistically. In that sense one could say that it's no pity about the Palace of the Republic: destruction has made it famous. Had this not been the case, it would be a building as many others and would probably not have received its prominence.<sup>20</sup>

Although the last part of this statement arguably denies the Palace's symbolic relevance as a political and popular building even prior to its destruction, the first part of Groys' words shall be further investigated by analysing one last artistic work: a film about its irreversible destruction.

### **Destruction and the Forced Transferral of Memories in Reynold Reynolds' *Last Day of the Republic* (2010)**

In 9 minutes, Reynold Reynolds' *Last Day of the Republic* captures images of the final phase of dismantlement, in which long-reach demolition caterpillars proceed with the dismantling of the Palace's four remaining concrete staircase blocks. The camera captures the process of dismantlement from different angles and shows the concrete remains mostly in relation to the surrounding classicist and modernist buildings. Only at the beginning of the film do the remains of the Palace stand untouched



Reynold Reynolds, *Letzter Tag der Republik*, still, 2010, 16 mm film transferred to single channel high definition video, courtesy of the artist

and seemingly steadfast. Reynolds' pictures have a somewhat nostalgic appeal on account of the 16-mm film material and its filtered colors with slight hues of blue and purple. But his film is not simply an aestheticized documentary. A split screen composition enables him to create varying combinations of images, sometimes showing two pictures side by side. When only one picture is shown, the other side either remains black or features the English translation of a spoken German poem that complements the images—a poem that German author Gerhard Falkner wrote especially for the film. It is delivered in a partly melancholic, partly ironic tone: by exaggerating and evoking lost antique cities such as Troy and Carthage and underlining the severity of oblivion,<sup>21</sup> the poem questions the plans for deconstructing the site.

From the first flickering picture, the sinister squeaking sound composition by Giuseppe Iacono adds a feeling of presentiment. Clouds and traffic pass by in time lapse, as the concrete blocks remain—for the time being—untouched. After two minutes of different perspectives, the split screen displays two pictures: on the left, one of the blocks is shown with a motionless caterpillar in front of it, a long-reach demolition machine, with its pair of tongs resting on the ground. Parallel to this, a different angle in a different light depicts all four remaining corner blocks. In a constant rhythm, the lens focuses and loses this focus again, which makes the picture, and the concrete remains it depicts, look as if they were pulsating or breathing.



Reynold Reynolds, *Letzter Tag der Republik*, 2010

The contrast to the next shot is extreme: Reynolds now uses only one side of the split screen, and thus makes the viewer focus on the depicted scene. In the violet light of dusk, with an electrical light drawing attention to its action, one of the "resting" long-reach demolition machines is shown "gnawing" on the concrete. As it begins to cut out large chunks of concrete, the destructive action is emphasized by Iacono's sounds of falling rubble and tremor. Other caterpillars are shown in similar action.



Reynold Reynolds, *Letzter Tag der Republik*, 2010

In the remainder of the film, the scenes become busier. The deconstruction is shown chronologically, disrupted only every now and then by the text of the poem on the black screen and the accompanying spoken German words, commenting on the future emptiness of the square and the baroque reconstruction plans. The end of the film shows a caterpillar in front of a pile of concrete rubble, pushing the last wall and making it fall over. Only the rubble remains; the image darkens, and in the next frame, the site is shown without any trace, without *eiripia*, of the socialist palace. At the amusement park in close proximity to the (de-)construction site we see the rhythmic spinning of a Ferris wheel, highlighting once again the passing of time.

Except for the very first frames, the concrete remains of the Palace are depicted in

a constant state of alteration and deconstruction. Reynolds' film thus denies its subject the contemplative durability of a ruin. It is, instead, the destructive process that becomes the main subject.

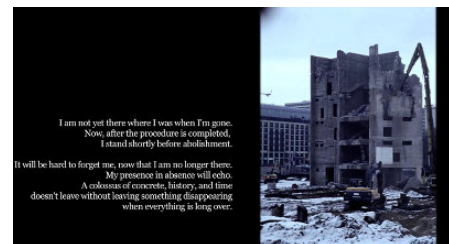
The Palace vanishes entirely, but its traces are captured on film. One of the poem's passages seems to almost directly reference Groys' statement, as it announces from the perspective of the Palace itself: "It will be hard to forget me, now that I am no longer there. / My presence in absence will echo. / A colossus of concrete, history, and time / doesn't leave without leaving something disappearing / when everything is long over".<sup>22</sup> This "something" is the artwork itself: the (artistic) documentation remembers the vanishing building. By filming the deconstruction, endorsed by soundtrack and poem, Reynolds constructs a new manifestation of possible associations with the socialist building and its removal, which the viewer can thenceforth process. Which raises the question: will it be the artwork that functions as a future *lieu de memoire* instead of the actual material remains of the building?

### Conclusion: Destruction as a Trigger for Artistic Memorial Sites

The aim of this article was to question the ruin iconography of the destruction of post-war architecture, using the example of the controversial modernist GDR palace. Its final process of removal took two years, but,

as shown, both the physical and the psychological subtraction extended much longer. The time span between Calle's *Detachment* series and Reynolds' film adds up to 14 years—exactly the amount of time the edifice was originally in use. These examples demonstrate that it can be the aim, purpose or obligation of artistic analysis to capture images of a building's disappearance or "de-architecturization".<sup>23</sup> At the same time, the artworks reviewed surpass a merely documentary approach, as each of them emphasizes various strands of meaning connected to the vanishing building, and the implications of this process itself.

The term "transitory ruin" can surely help us understand these artworks, but it is, above all, Dillon's suggested "indeterminacy" that crucially marks the building's status in each of them. This instability is perhaps best conveyed by means of



Reynold Reynolds, *Letzter Tag der Republik*, 2010

photography, video and film, as opposed to painting or installation. Antoine Picon suggests an explanation: "photography or cinema interprets the contemporary urban landscape more readily than does an art such as painting. The framings that they propose have a greater capacity for instability, and this instability resonates well with that of a limitless landscape".<sup>24</sup> It seems logical that these media would resonate well with the instability of destruction.

The last residue of the Palace was removed in 2008. In comparison to the Twin Towers, its material structure has not "survived". But whereas the "National September 11 Memorial & Museum" commemorates the famous collapsed towers at their original site in lower Manhattan, the destroyed Palace has no physical *lieu de mémoire* that offers itself up for contemplation. Of course the events and damage are not comparable in terms of their tragedy, but the Palace bore, as was shown, an abundant amount of symbolic charge as well. One could argue that Reynolds and Nina Fischer & Maroan el Sani have demonstrated a similar intention to that of Sophie Calle with *The Detachment*: they have filmed the disappearance, and replaced the vanishing "monument" with an artistic memory of this *lieu de mémoire*, creating a new space for remembrance and symbolic charge. Along the way, these artworks raise questions about a new, contemporary, indeterminable and thus possibly transitory ruin motif, one which we will surely see more of in the future.

## Footnotes

1 This article is the author's first investigation of the subject of decaying or destroyed post-war architecture in contemporary art, and is part of her dissertation project at the Institute of Art and Visual History at Humboldt Universität zu Berlin. Its working title is *The contemporary ruin? Decaying post-war architecture in photography and time-based media since 1990*. It raises more questions than answers, and the author is grateful for any critical advice. It might be added that the subject is solely considered from the point of view of art and visual history, not from that of monument conservation or other related fields.

2 "Dismantling" is the term used for the slow removal of buildings, as opposed to "demolition." In the case of the Palace, the dismantlement was due to residues of

asbestos contamination in the roof, and the unstable grounds of Museum Island upon which the Palace was located.

3 Aleida Assmann et al., eds, *Ruinenbilder* (Munich: Fink, 2002).

4 Aleida Assmann et al., "Ruinenbilder: Einleitung", in Assmann, *Ruinenbilder*, 7. For an analysis of how and why images of terror may become part of the collective memory of these events, see Charlotte Klonk, "Macht der Bilder—Attentate als Medienereignis", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 45-46 (2013): 30–39.

5 Assmann, "Ruinenbilder", 7.

6 Brian Dillon, "Introduction—A Short History of Decay," in Brian Dillon, *Ruins—Whitechapel: Documents of Contemporary Art* (London: The MIT Press 2011), 10.

7 Dillon, "Introduction", 11.

8 The fascination of contemporary artists with the decaying buildings of the post-war era might also be rooted in the questions raised by their often poor building quality: restoration or demolition? The debate about the value of postwar architecture as part of Europe's architectural heritage is flourishing, especially in Germany, where journalists, scientists and activists discuss the standing of post-war architecture. See Olaf Gisbertz, ed., *Nachkriegsmoderne kontrovers—Positionen der Gegenwart* (Berlin: Jovis, 2012).

9 See Stefanie Flamm, "Der Palast der Republik," in *Deutsche Erinnerungsorte*, vol. II, eds. Etienne Francois and Hagen Schulze (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2001), 668.

10 Bruno Flierl, "Hintergründe des Palastbaus," in *Von Erichs Lampenladen zur Asbestruine*, ed. Kirsten Heidler (Berlin: Argon, 1998), 64.

11 This art, theatre and performance project, which was called "Volkspalast," temporarily converted the Palace into a multi-purpose cultural centre once again. In 2006, it won the special prize of the jury in the European Prize for Urban Public Space. See also Amelie Deuffhard, Sophie Krempl-Klieeisen, "Volkspalast—History of an interim usage. Art-Intervention-Activism-Transformation", *Monu—magazine on Urbanism* 4 (2005): 75–80.

12 For the debates about the value of the Palace and the possible reconstruction

of the castle, see Anke Kuhrmann, *Der Palast der Republik. Geschichte und Bedeutung des Ost-Berliner Parlaments- und Kulturhauses* (Petersberg: Imhof, 2006), 228, as well as Flamm, "Palast der Republik" and Michael Falser, *Zwischen Identität und Authentizität. Zur politischen Geschichte der Denkmalpflege in Deutschland* (Dresden: Thelem Universitätsverlag, 2008).

13 Flamm, "Palast der Republik," 667–672.

14 This decision is still highly controversial as of writing. See different opinions gathered on the blog of the Federal Foundation of "Baukultur" (Building Culture), [http://www.bkult.de/de\\_DE/888.ist\\_es\\_harmlos\\_historisierend\\_zu\\_bauen/](http://www.bkult.de/de_DE/888.ist_es_harmlos_historisierend_zu_bauen/) and—also available in English—on a blog edited by Philipp Oswald, director of the Bauhaus Foundation in Dessau: <http://schlossdebatte.de/>, accessed November 27, 2013.

15 Calle, *The Detachment*, 26, 27.

16 Calle, *The Detachment*, 6. For an extensive analysis of the monuments in East and West Germany, especially East Berlin, after 1990, see Jürgen Trimborn, *Denkmale als Inszenierungen im öffentlichen Raum. Ein Blick auf die gegenwärtige Denkmalproblematik in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland aus denkmalpflegerischer und medienwissenschaftlicher Sicht* (Cologne: Teiresias Verlag, 1997).

17 The statement was released in June of 1992. Reproduced in: Sophie Calle, *The Detachment* (Berlin: G+B Arts International, 1996), 26.

18 Calle, *The Detachment*, 7.

19 The work was first presented in 2001 in their solo exhibition at Galerie EIGEN+ART Leipzig and subsequently at the Center for Curatorial Studies at Bard College, New York, as well as at the show "Present Tense" at Gwangju Biennial 2002. In these last two exhibitions, the installation was supplemented with a live web image of the Palace of the Republic in Berlin.

20 Boris Groys, "Ikonoklasmus und der Palast der Republik, Berlin. Ein Gespräch zwischen Boris Groys, Nina Fischer und Maroan el Sani", in *Nina Fischer & Maroan el Sani. Blind Spots*, eds. Jelle Bouwhuis, Nina Fischer, Maroan el Sani (Zurich: JNP Ringier, 2008), 133. Translation by the author.

21 "I had a lovely homeland long ago. / The know-no-longer grew so splendid there", 0:54 min.

22 "Es wird schwer sein, mich zu vergessen, jetzt wo ich nicht mehr da sein werde. / Meine Anwesenheit in der Abwesenheit wird nachklingen. / Ein Koloss aus Beton, Geschichte und Zeit, der geht nicht, –/ ohne dass etwas bleibt, was noch verschwindet, / wenn alles längst vorbei ist", 3:40 min.

23 Hartmut Böhme, "Die Ästhetik der Ruinen", in *Der Schein des Schönen*, eds. D. Kamper, Chr. Wulf (Göttingen: Steidl Gerhard, 1989), 287.

24 Antoine Picon, "Anxious Landscapes: From Ruin to Rust", *Grey Room 1* (2000): 72.