

You can feel energy move through hard things.

In my bedroom there's a pipe that comes from the central heating system, it travels along the base of the wall just above the skirting boards. My bed is a mattress on the floor, I feel it all from down here. Almost everything happens on the floor. There's so much energy it hisses, the metal pipes clunk as it makes its way through to my neighbour's flat. We share this pipe, I keep my end in good shape to ensure its safe passage.

Since moving into this flat two years ago, I still haven't sorted out the Wi-Fi. There's an incompatibility issue so I use my Personal Hotspot. My phone overheats often.

In Berlin rentals, there is a heating window from October to May, so you get your fair share. I have a tendency to get hot, so I keep my radiators off. An ex-boyfriend used to call me a bun, like I was baking in an oven.

On a delayed train from Hamburg last year, I was struck by how quickly people adapt. As we all came to terms with the fact of a five hour delay, there was a fascinating shift in atmosphere. It was dusk, things slowed down. In second class seats, bodies contorted into comfortable shapes, shoes were removed, hoodies became pillows. As passengers softened and sunk into sleep I observed how they shaped their own bit of personal space, and how the edges of these spaces were soft and flexible; they had to be.

I took this photograph of the surviving coaches from King Ludwig II of Bavaria's (1845–1886) court train at the Deutsche Bahn Museum in Nuremberg. Commissioned in 1864, when he was eighteen, these Baroque coaches formed part of Ludwig's first construction project. They allowed the shy king to move privately from place to place while still displaying his stately power. Construction would become his obsession. Ludwig dedicated his life to building ever more elaborate hiding places, culminating in Neuschwanstein, his fairy tale castle in Bavaria. I went to the crypt under the altar of St Michael's Church in Munich to visit Ludwig's tomb. His coffin was right there, at waist height.

Working with clay, I'm learning to manage collapse. Several times the chair part of the seated figure fell off. I have a collection of broken parts that keep me company in the studio, I keep them moist.

Monday 6th July, 2026: The sculptures are out of the kiln in one piece, the relief is overwhelming. Daavid and I collect the sculptures, get them back to the studio safely, then celebrate with lunch at Ikea.

Mark Barker

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