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**Snail houses for Berlin**  
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Co Westerik

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Whenever I leave Berlin, I notice a funky smell on my clothes. It is not sweaty, musky or damp, and not entirely disgusting, rather constructional than corporeal: disused coal ovens, the dust between floorboards, smokey debris. An unheated bedroom. A calcified faucet. Abandonment – with a side of sourdough. What might sound like the notes of an overused and outdated niche perfume, sets off my alarm bells: get. away. from. me.

I recently gave up the stability, and by now privilege, of a tenancy contract and entered an endless chain of sublets, something I had successfully avoided for most of my stay in this city. The housing market is for gamblers and investors, and I classified as risk-adverse with no assets.

In the old apartment I left behind a fridge, an old mattress, some oatmeal and a pile of clothes. It took about a week until I realized that the smell had moved along with my other stuff into my new place. How to get rid of this all too familiar scent? Something that one is so habituated to, that it disappears from one's own perception and only enters consciousness when removed from the context of home? Can it be left behind?

I try to pin down where I first collected the specific particles and organisms that make up that odor. I have inhaled bits of all kinds of architectures. Drank leaded water from old pipes. Shared drinks and kissed asses. Fed my microbiome. I imagine that these conjunctions are starting to grow a house inside of me.

I am reminded of my time in art school and how everything was always dusty. I walk to my newly installed bookshelf in my newly inhabited apartment – *“congrats, what an upgrade”* – and pull out a Paul Thek catalogue. I don't consider myself to be a particularly nostalgic person – but perhaps the inside of The Tomb bore olfactory resemblance to what I'm describing? I am flipping through the pages, looking for a drawing that says *GET OVER YOURSELF GET OVER YOURSELF GET OVER YOURSELF GET OVER YOURSELF*. Instead, I find a little printed snail crawling over the back of the book, with wings attached to its shell and stars sparkling over its tentacles, the perfect setup, and what more could you ask for?

Christopher Wierling