

“Verlassene Stadt” Sybil Kohl, Philipp Oswalt, Albrecht Schäfer

Opening Friday, July 18th, 2002, 7 – 9 p.m.
Exhibition dates July 19th – August 3rd, 2002
Opening hours Wed – Fri 1 - 7 p.m., Sat 1 – 6 p.m.

Galerie Kamm is proud to present “Verlassene Stadt”, an exhibition by Sybil Kohl, Philipp Oswalt and Albrecht Schäfer, in the context of the project “rethinking: space, time and architecture”. The exhibition is the first part of the project “Drei Städte – Verlassene Stadt, Ersatzstadt, Ungebaute Stadt”.

Three Cities

In eastern Germany, a million apartments are currently unoccupied; countless commercial buildings, social institutions, and industrial areas also lie unused. The volume of vacancy is equivalent to the total built space of the cities of Rostock, Wismar, Potsdam, Magdeburg, Cottbus, Halle, Erfurt, Gera, Zwickau, and Chemnitz.

What kinds of spaces are being abandoned?

In the course of our research, we came upon real estate auction catalogues that expose the phenomenon in a different light. Whereas a tendency initially exists to associate the vacancy with the panel construction housing developments on the city’s periphery, an entirely different reality is revealed here: from the weekend house and the apartment building to the mansion or palace, whether in the city center or out in the country – a large variety of locations and situations are being affected by vacancy.

Taking an evaluation of real estate ads of the last decade as the point of departure, a picture of the abandoned locations begins to evolve. Assembled together, the image of a ghost town arises with 2.1 million inhabitants, apartment and commercial buildings, train stations, industrial plants, day care and shopping centers.

Along with this “Abandoned City,” an analysis of the real estate ads for new buildings also conveys an image of a “Substitute City.” This city consists in the constructions that have actually been built over the past ten years as well as the compromises between planning and realization, the many new streets and one-family homes, offices, shopping centers, inner-city renewals, etc.

Neither the “Abandoned City” nor the “Substitute City,” however, lives up to the planners’ and investors’ desires. For this reason, a third city, called the “Unbuilt City,” has been designed. Using planned but unrealized projects from the 90s, a picture forms that depicts investors’ dreams and architectonic fantasies.

Visualizing these three cities reveals their physical, social, and mental changes and poses the question as to how we think and act in terms of the city today.

Sybil Kohl, Philipp Oswalt, Albrecht Schäfer (Translation Andrea Scrima)