



monumental

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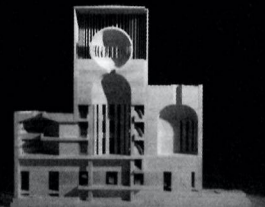
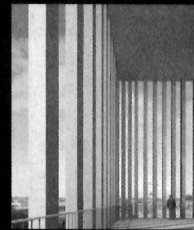
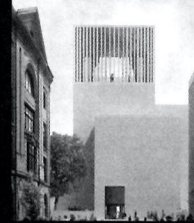
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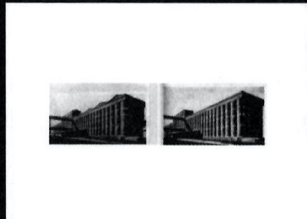
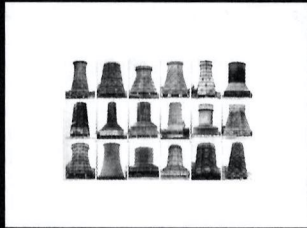
Momentary Monuments

wilfried kuehn

The House of One in Berlin is a project we have been working on since 2012, and which is soon to be built. Foundation works are already underway at this time. It is a project in which the monumental plays an important role. The programme itself points towards the idea of a monument: three sacred spaces – a synagogue, a church and a mosque – all together in one building. And of course, our design also stresses certain ideas that seem to be common to monumentality such as the brick facade with few but large openings as well as the height of the building in relation to its context. The loggia on top of the building also provides a view over the city, so it stands out. A series of historical churches preceded the House of One on the building, which is in fact Berlin's very first documented site. So, you might argue that it is monumental in a historical sense and as an archaeological site it will reveal the traces of the former church. Although it has yet to be built, it already exists through several exhibitions that have taken place over the past seven years. And what follows each exhibition of this project is an architectural discourse on a variety of issues. In Paris we presented the project as a 1:1 floor plan on the ground of the big hall of Le Centquatre. The V&A in London acquired the 1:50 wooden section model for their collection, where it was shown in a more

- Fig. 1 The House of One, main entrance, visualisation, Berlin, 2019
- Fig. 2 The House of One, city loggia, visualisation, Berlin, 2019
- Fig. 3 Petriplatz, archaeological excavations, Berlin, 2009
- Fig. 4 The House of One, archaeological hall, visualisation, Berlin, 2015
- Fig. 5 Le Centquatre Paris, The House of One, floor plan installation, Paris, 2017
- Fig. 6 Collection of the Victoria & Albert Museum, The House of One, section model 1:50, London, 2018





classical way. At the first Chicago Biennial it was shown as an inverse model focusing on the spaces as volumes in combination with two artworks by Armin Linke and Marko Lulić addressing the use of these spaces. The first wood model was our competition entry; it is actually very small and still attracts a lot of attention, so perhaps monumentality is not about bigness after all. Maybe the monumental could be very small, even intangible. The monumental could reside in an effect rather than in the object itself. Presence or impact in the public sphere may be what distinguishes the monumental, and it is with that thought that I would like to start my argument.

Hilla and Bernd Becher collected typologies of utilitarian buildings. They extensively photographed them, catalogued and exhibited them. Being photographed and shown in a number of black and white series reveals a monumental aspect even though the photographed buildings as such were not monuments at all. This brings us back to the early 20th century when Walter Gropius and Le Corbusier published images of the same grain elevator: Le Corbusier retouched the photograph eliminating the gabled roof while Gropius showed the same image years before including the roof. Discounting the limited historical accuracy of these images, the silos were perceived as monumental not because they were big or architecturally specific but because they were viewed as archetypes. The monumental resides in their impact, which

Fig. 7 Chicago Architecture Biennial 2015, models of The House of One, Kuehn Malvezzi with Armin Linke and Marko Lulić, Chicago, 2015

Fig. 8 Chicago Architecture Biennial 2015, models of The House of One, Kuehn Malvezzi with Armin Linke and Marko Lulić, Chicago, 2015

Fig. 9 The House of One Press Event at Petriplatz Berlin, 2012

Fig. 10 *Anonyme Skulpturen-Kühltürme*, Bernd and Hilla Becher, *Conceptual Art* by Peter Osborne, New York, 2002, p. 107

Fig. 11 Silo à grain, *Vers une Architecture*, Le Corbusier, Paris, 1923, p. 11

Fig. 12 *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Werbundes*, Walter Gropius, Berlin, 1913, p. 18

has to do with repetition and with being anonymous. The opposite of an artwork, it would seem. When Raimund Abraham published *Elementare Architektur* in the 1960s, gabled buildings appeared once again, and they are just as anonymous as the grain elevators, just as utilitarian, ordinary and even vernacular; and once again they are paradoxically monumental. The same is true of the image of a barn published by Aldo Rossi in his *Autobiografia Scientifica* in 1981. Archetypal buildings serve to make an argument that is geared towards architecture understood as morphology, not as singularity. Bernard Rudofsky's *Architecture Without Architects* already transcended the singular object in favour of the urban fabric as a collectively authored work: the repetition of typological elements that become monumental in forming a collective architectural design. Alison and Peter Smithson noted in 1956 that "Gropius wrote a book on grain silos, Le Corbusier one on airplanes, and Charlotte Perriand brought a new object to the office every morning, but today we collect ads" and called on architects to understand "the influence on mass standards and mass aspirations of advertising" in relation to the shrinking effect avant-garde architects have on shaping contemporary society. Can the implicit monumentality of image circulation produce a collective form that translates the power of anonymous architecture into contemporary design?

Momentane Monumente was the title of a

Fig. 13 *Elementare Architektur*, Residenz Verlag Salzburg, Raimund J. Abraham, 1963, p. 24-25

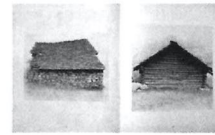
Fig. 14 *Autobiografia Scientifica*, Aldo Rossi, Parma, 1990, p. 73

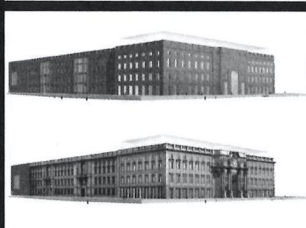
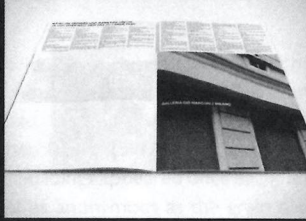
Fig. 15 *Architecture Without Architects, A Short Introduction to Non-Pedigreed Architecture*, Bernard Rudofsky, New York, 1964, p. 54

Fig. 16 *Evadne in green dimension*, Eduardo Paolozzi, 1952

Fig. 17 *a, A novel* by Andy Warhol, front cover, Grove Press, New York City, 1968

Fig. 18 *Momentary Monuments*, exhibition catalogue, Kuehn Malvezzi, Berlin, 2005





double exhibition Kuehn Malvezzi did in 2005 at the Berlinische Galerie and Aedes West in Berlin. In calling it *Momentary Monuments*, we wanted to speak about our work by discussing an inherent monumentality of architecture that we identified in its collective form and that needed to be related to the temporary and the everyday in its ability to inform our understanding of architecture as a contemporary collective practice relating to archetypes conceptually. Working in the field of museum and display architecture but feeling at a loss when faced with the task of displaying ourselves, we asked an artist to get involved and take over the exhibition. Michael Riedel is a visual artist who also considers himself to be a writer in the sense of Andy Warhol's *a, A Novel*, a transcript of a tape recording two weeks of Warhol's real-life experiences during the mid-1960s around the Factory. Reality transcribed into a text becoming an image: could this be thought of as an analogous act of Rudofsky's image of the flat houses forming a collective texture, taking into consideration the Smithsons' call for tackling mass circulation? Working together with Michael Riedel on the exhibition, we started with the catalogue. We wanted the space of the publication to be our exhibition space, because we felt architecture is architecture when it's out there and as an exhibit it's something else. Riedel decided to tape-record the production processes of our catalogue, and from that enlarged the format of the catalogue to have it printed in an extra edition that was nearly an A4 format

Fig. 19 *Momentary Monuments*, exhibition catalogue, Kuehn Malvezzi, Berlin, 2005

Fig. 20 Ibid.

Fig. 21 *Momentary Monuments*, installation view with Michael Riedel Aedes West, Berlin, 2005

Fig. 22 Moderne Galerie Saarlandmuseum Extension, shell construction, Saarbrücken, 2012

Fig. 23 Basilica of Sant'Andrea, Mantua, Leon Battista, Franco Borsi, 1981, p. 254 fig. 261

Fig. 24 Humboldt-Forum, competition entry, solid brick construction without and with cladding, Kuehn Malvezzi, Berlin, 2008

by extending the square into a rectangle with an extra text on top of the square. This extra text told the story of the production of the catalogue starting with the graphic designer, followed by the printer, the bookbinder and the bookseller. Riedel recorded and transcribed the four original situations of our production process with no edits and made an installation out of it that featured his transformed catalogue alongside our square one. One of the four installations is made of a white life-size wood reproduction of a table with the catalogues on top of it; the model-like piece replicates the original table by Egon Eiermann which was used as a selling point at Berlin's architecture bookshop right next to the exhibition space. We speak about the momentary, the temporary and the mediatic, both in the way we showed the projects and as pertains to the projects as such. Even if our projects were small or temporary, they were definitely meant to be monuments. The focus was not on the invention of individual signature pieces, but instead in the search for collective archetypical designs that speak of time and place.

In 2013 we were invited to an unusual competition. We again felt this was a moment in which we needed to collaborate with an artist from the beginning, and once again we asked Michael Riedel to join us. What we found on site in Saarbrücken was the concrete shell structure of an unfinished museum building. An extension for the Moderne Galerie

Fig. 25 Moderne Galerie Saarlandmuseum Saarbrücken, main entrance, Hanns Schönecker

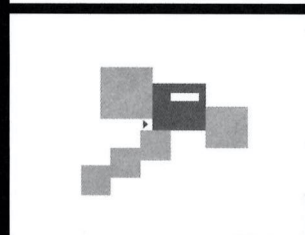
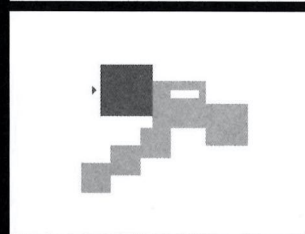
Fig. 26 "Versagen in Saarbrücken. Erweiterungsbau für die Galerie der Gegenwart", Dietmar Schellin

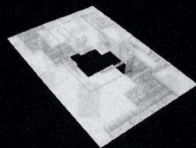
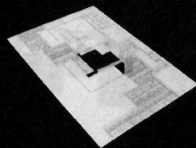
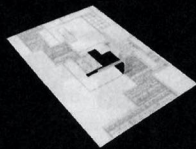
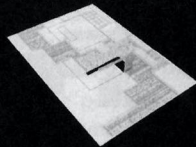
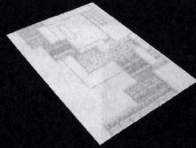
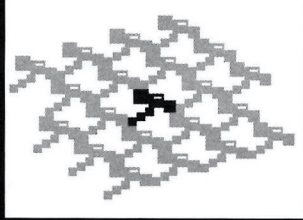
Fig. 27 Moderne Galerie Saarlandmuseum Extension Saarbrücken, reconceptualisation, Kuehn Malvezzi, Michael Riedel, 2013

Fig. 28 Ibid.

Fig. 29 Ibid.

Fig. 30 Moderne Galerie Saarlandmuseum Extension, site plan, Kuehn Malvezzi, Michael Riedel, Saarbrücken, 2017





Saarlandmuseum which stood like a bunker in an otherwise beautiful museum ensemble from the 1960s. A state project financed by public funds but with no cast. No museum director, no architect, no construction firm were present, the reason being a series of corruption cases, lawsuits and misunderstandings between the former planners and their client. This situation reminded us of the question we faced in 2008 while taking part in the competition for the Berlin Palace, known as the Humboldt-Forum. A predefined building volume, a dubious political background that couldn't be ignored, a controversial situation with many contradictions to be dealt with and a focus on the question how the very facade could become the point of intervention to the degree that it is to be conceived as an autonomous part of the future museum building. At the time we challenged the idea of the monumental palace reconstruction, thinking that the architectural task was less about reconstructing the image of a building than about making the process of an enactment visible. We thought of the monumental as a function of time and drew on Alberti's unclad facades like the exposed brickwork of the church of Sant'Andrea in Mantova as our model. Finished and unfinished at once, these facades speak of collective intentions, of partial failure and of the fact that a built structure is subject to time, no matter how complete it is. It is a very beautiful brick relief that can be read as an open book, and as a direct expression of collective memory.

Fig. 31 Moderne Galerie Saarlandmuseum Extension, pattern repeat, Kuehn Malvezzi, Michael Riedel, Saarbrücken, 2013

Fig. 32 Moderne Galerie Saarlandmuseum Extension, concept model, Kuehn Malvezzi, Michael Riedel, Saarbrücken, 2013

Fig. 33 Ibid.

Fig. 34 Ibid.

Fig. 35 Ibid.

Fig. 36 Ibid.

For me it is monumental because I can read it. And I can read the contradictions in it, too. Collective memory over time is less a question of representation than one of recording and memorising collective action as it unfolds. For Berlin's Humboldt-Forum we proposed an equivalent, enacting the palace reconstruction as a collective process, open-ended. We proposed an exposed solid brick construction, a life-size model of the volume of the former baroque palace which over time could be complemented by reconstructed elements of stone and plaster cladding according to the amount of private donations flowing in. Rather than being scared of lacking the private funds to complete the facade, following the German parliament's decision to publicly fund the new building but not the reconstruction of its ornamental wrapping, we were interested in the open-ended process that would unfold publicly and give rise to a notion of the monumental we felt to be contemporary and historical at once.

At the Moderne Galerie Saarlandmuseum in Saarbrücken we were confronted with a pavilion ensemble by Hanns Schönecker dating back to 1968. It opened the same year as two other late-modern museum galleries in Germany, Mies van der Rohe's Neue Nationalgalerie and Philip Johnson's Kunsthalle Bielefeld. Schönecker created a pavilion ensemble that was to grow step by step and which ultimately should have been completed by one last extension dedicated to

Fig. 37 Moderne Galerie Saarlandmuseum, figure-ground scheme, Kuehn Malvezzi, Michael Riedel, Saarbrücken, 2017

Fig. 38 Ibid., pattern repeat

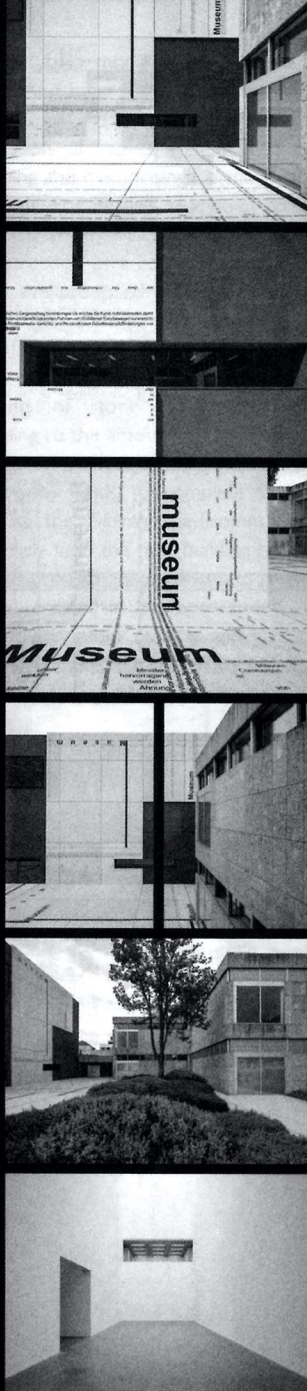
Fig. 39 Ibid., pattern repeat, detail

Fig. 40 Moderne Galerie Saarlandmuseum Extension, detail of facade and square, visualisation Kuehn Malvezzi, Michael Riedel, Saarbrücken, 2015

Fig. 41 Moderne Galerie Saarlandmuseum Extension, printing process, Kuehn Malvezzi, Michael Riedel, Saarbrücken, 2017

Fig. 42 Ibid., detail of facade and square





contemporary art: after a competition in 2007 the concrete shell construction went up but stalled and was eventually abandoned. While some local residents initiated a campaign calling for the dismantling of the unfinished building, a new government tried to save the investment by initiating an architectural competition for its completion.

Together with Michael Riedel we decided to start with the existing contradictions rather than making a clean cut. Collective failure became the starting point. The problem was embedded in the extension as it was planned: it was supposed to become the new entrance to the museum. We discarded that idea and brought the entrance back to the central 1968 pavilion, the nucleus of the ensemble. A very logical move as it rebalances the pavilion structure and revalues the existing museum constellation. Still, there was a consequence of this decision to be dealt with, in so far as the historical entrance in the meantime had been blocked from the street by the extension volume. Evidently, the landscape design now turned into a decisive part of the overall scheme, revealing itself to be inseparable from the architectural design. We considered the new facade and the free spaces as one and the same element: Michael Riedel used the existing pavilion structure to create a pattern analogous to a textile that he then mirrored and laid over the whole museum site. Once laid out, the pattern encountered the unfinished volume in plan and was folded up

Fig. 43 Moderne Galerie Saarlandmuseum Extension, facade and square. Kuehn Malvezzi, Michael Riedel, Saarbrücken, 2017

Fig. 44 Ibid., facade detail

Fig. 45 Ibid., facade and square detail

Fig. 46 Ibid., facade and square

Fig. 47 Ibid., view of the main entrance

Fig. 48 Ibid., atrium

the building volume. As a result, a fragmented pattern covers the facade and makes the public square and the public facade readable as one and the same element. The pattern is used by Riedel as a white canvas or a piece of paper to be printed on if you like, covering it with a black text in Arial typeface.

It was our approach to turn the process around: the alienation between museum and citizens as well as the political scandal was based on an estrangement that should be reversed, and in order to do so the opacity of the decision making needed to be turned around, so the planning process would be public for the first time. Following our proposal, the text was supposed to be the literal transcript of the competition procedures leading to the decision for the new architectural design. Legal objections by the principal torpedoed our concept but not its intent: to cover the roughly 4,000 square metres of the public square and facade, an unedited transcript of the decisive parliamentary session which approved our design, was used.

In the way our exhibition catalogue from *Momentary Monuments* in 2005 carried the narrative of its own production history, the giant texture covering the facade and the square of the museum carries the narrative of its own political history, visibly inscribed into its surface like a watermark. Names of former museum directors, of decision makers, culture ministers, architects and artists all

Fig. 49 Moderne Galerie Saarlandmuseum Extension, atrium, Kuehn Malvezzi, Michael Riedel, Saarbrücken, 2017

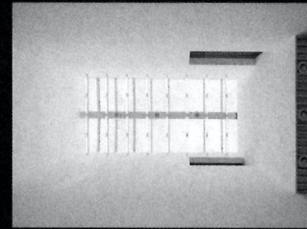
Fig. 50 Ibid.

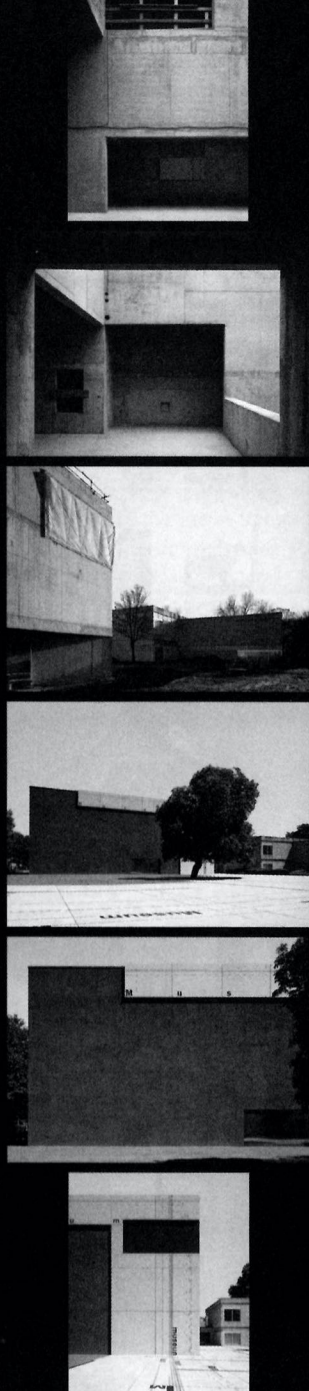
Fig. 51 Ibid.

Fig. 52 Ibid, staircase

Fig. 53 Ibid, atrium with installation by Pae White

Fig. 54 Moderne Galerie Saarlandmuseum Extension, atrium, shell construction, Saarbrücken, 2012





appear in the transcript. Still, the entire text also reads like an ornament. Riedel composed it in two directions which were overlaid. The printer applied the words one by one onto the finished concrete panels, each measuring four by four metres. The process became the very subject of our design and it had a cathartic effect: the formerly hostile residents embraced their museum once again and celebrated the overcoming of a deep political crisis, not by removing it from being public but by making it an indelible mark within the public realm. So, instead of interpreting the past triumphantly, but as a process, and the space of the museum in the city becoming both content and form as a text and as an artwork, the architectural project has been reintegrated into the residents' life and speaks of their collective history. We know museums to be very introverted spaces, and thus they are not the most transparent buildings. Exhibitions are fragile. They require a lot of care and protection from the climate, light and theft, which makes them rather opaque. If a museum cannot be transparent in the most direct way, the facade can speak in its own way though. Transparency can take place on another level. I think this is what we achieved here. The entire museum is now a place of exhibition both from the inside and from the outside. One can also read the intervention of Michael Riedel as an installation making use of the museum as a display.

Hans-Christian Schink took photographs

Fig. 55 Moderne Galerie Saarlandmuseum Extension, shell construction, Saarbrücken, 2012

Fig. 56 Ibid.

Fig. 57 Ibid.

Fig. 58 Moderne Galerie Saarlandmuseum Extension, Kuehn Malvezzi, Michael Riedel, Saarbrücken, 2017

Fig. 59 Ibid.

Fig. 60 Ibid.

before and after our intervention, first of the apparent concrete ruin, and then of the finished building. In these photographs there are many detailed aspects such as the topiary that we placed in the centre of the outside spaces and which mirrors a patio in Hanns Schönecker's central pavilion within the repetition of the pattern. I read the whole now as a monument, not just a building. It is the urban space, the square and the landscape collecting the existing and the new, integrating it into a novel museum ensemble.

Fig. 61 Moderne Galerie Saarlandmuseum Extension, Kuehn Malvezzi,
Michael Riedel, Saarbrücken, 2017

- Fig. 62 Ibid.
- Fig. 63 Ibid.
- Fig. 64 Ibid.
- Fig. 65 Ibid.
- Fig. 66 Ibid.

