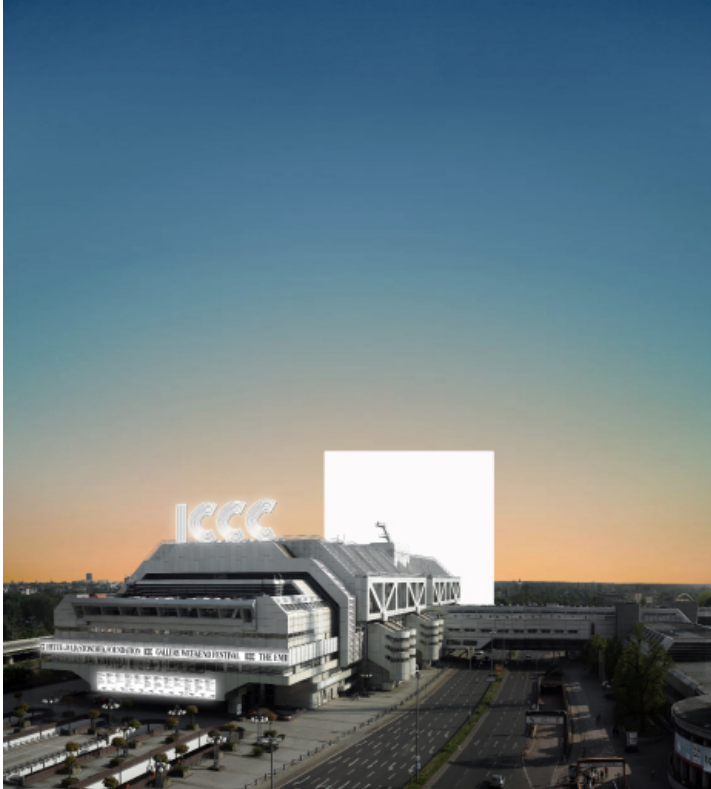


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Press Kit
Berlin, 25.5.23

Bureau N und Something Fantastic, Konzept ICC - International Center for Contemporary Culture, 2014-2023
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Suddenly Wonderful

**Visions for chunky 1970's
architecture in West Berlin**

26.5. – 18.9.23

**BERLINISCHE
GALERIE
MUSEUM OF
MODERN ART**



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Suddenly Wonderful Visions for chunky 1970's architecture in West Berlin

26.5. – 18.9.23

During the Cold War, some notable big buildings went up in West Berlin as new sites for research, education and cultural activity. They include the International Congress Centre (ICC Berlin, 1973–1979), also known as the “Battleship Charlottenburg”, the erstwhile Institute of Hygiene and Microbiology (1969–1974) and the former Central Animal Labs, nicknamed “Mäusebunker”, at the Freie Universität Berlin in Lichtenfelde (1971–1981), and the tower restaurant in Steglitz better known as the “Bierpinsel”. While they made their mark on the urban landscape by dint of their sheer size, the popular nicknames coined by residents have likewise set their stamp on local parlance.

West Berlin's monuments to high-tech modernism

With their futuristic shapes, functional complexity and novel façades, these buildings symbolised a contemporary belief in progress. They were also intended to show the world that the walled-off half-city remained a competitive force. And yet they were criticised from the outset as ugly and inefficient. Today, after years of neglect and now technologically obsolete, they are regularly threatened with demolition.

But that destiny is being increasingly challenged by academics, artists and politicians who value these architectures as impressive monuments to the high-tech modernism of the West. By singling out a number of examples, this exhibition turns the spotlight on these debates and on efforts to preserve and revitalise this historical and cultural heritage.

Blueprints by reputed architects

On show are blueprints by reputed architects and planners based in Berlin, all of whom appreciate the existing buildings: as valuable resources in pursuit of the energy transition and as places that generate a sense of identity for residents and users. The practice of these teams derives from recognising the potential for new uses in existing architectural structures.

ICC

The team at GRAFT, for example, have proposed converting the ICC into a research and development hub for e-mobility. Theirs is a response both to the present structure and to a major challenge of our times.

The same applies to the blueprint from Roland Böving and Christina Neuner. Aware that this huge building has always been criticised for its enormous energy consumption, they want to cloak it in a biosphere that will make it a carbon-free zone and to enhance its inhospitable setting with an abundance of greenery.

Something Fantastic and Bureau N are keen to preserve the ICC as a total art work that blends architecture, design and technology and to upgrade it for the 21st century: apart from art and culture, there would be room here for a server farm – an infrastructure for the digital age from which all Berlin could benefit, with waste heat channelled back into the building's energy supply.

“Mäusebunker”

Blueprints for converting the “Mäusebunker” are currently being devised by both the private and the public sector. 60 experts from different fields have been assessing the future potential for this challenging structure in a model procedure initiated by Berlin's Heritage Authority in partnership with the Charité teaching hospital and the Senate Department for Urban Development, Building and Housing. The process and the findings are on show here for the first time.

The team at b+ (bplus.xyz) have also been exploring ways to save the “mouse bunker”. They are seeking to turn a building that once



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symbolised human domination over the natural world into a prototype for architecture where people and nature can coexist. This means breaking open a building that had been hermetically sealed for functional reasons, with big windows to replace the grid-like concrete façade.

This exhibition brings together new ideas with designs, technical drawings and films from the museum's collection, some never displayed before. They tell the story of how these buildings were conceived and created. Works by artists such as Kay Fingerle, Beate Gütschow, Matthias Hoch and Tracey Snelling contribute a present-day take on these striking icons of the 1970s. There are some 85 works on show by about 20 architectural and planning practices, photographers and artists.

Artists:

Bernhard Boës (1931-2011), Jennifer Bulla (*1989), Patrick Huth (*1985), Ulrich Conrads (1923-2013), Peter Cürliis (1924-2013), Nathan Eddy (*1984), Kay Fingerle, Reinhard Friedrich (1928-2014), Andreas Gehrke (*1975), Beate Gütschow (*1970), Matthias Hoch (*1958), Frank Oehring (*1939), Tracey Snelling (*1970)

Architects, architecture offices and others:

Barkow Leibinger (est. 1993), Roland Böving (*1962), Bureau N (est. 2008), b+ (bplus.xyz) (est. 2022), Fehling+Gogel (1953-1990), GRAFT Architekten (est. 1998), G+M Hänska (1962-1973), Kleihues + Kleihues (est. 1996), J. Mayer H. (est. 1996), Christina Neuner (*1983), Kurt Schmiersow, Schüler & Schüler Witte (1967-2007), Something Fantastic (est. 2010), s+ (station.plus), IEA, D-ARCH, ETH Zürich, Landesdenkmalamt Berlin in cooperation with Charité Universitätsmedizin and the Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen. Realisation of the exhibition contribution: Forward Planung und Forschung, Ludwig Heimbach Architektur, Make_Shift

Funded by the Senate Department for Culture and Europe.

Online tickets

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Press images

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Admission 10 €, concessions 6 €

Wed – Mon 10 am – 6 pm
Tue closed

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Architects (selected)

Barkow Leibinger

Barkow Leibinger was set up in 1993 in Berlin by architects Regine Leibinger and Frank Barkow. The practice now employs about 90 people. Numerous projects at home and abroad have been carried out in recent decades. A particular focus is placed on innovative construction technologies, on research into materials and on sustainable structures.

b+ (bplus.xyz)

bplus.xyz (b+), founded in Berlin in 2022, is a team of architects operating at the intersection between theory and praxis and across wide-ranging media and formats. The practice aims to deliver answers to the challenges of our time – such as socio-ecological transformation and the re-use of existing buildings – which are viable in both environmental and economic terms. b+ draws on a collaborative model to develop and implement projects, working together with different actors and stakeholders.

GRAFT

GRAFT was founded in Los Angeles in 1998 by Lars Krückeberg, Wolfram Putz and Thomas Willemet. It operates worldwide in the fields of urban development, architecture and design. The hybrid office with branches in Berlin and Shanghai is distinctive for its experimental, interdisciplinary design practice and its futuristic style.

Kleihues + Kleihues

Kleihues + Kleihues was founded in Berlin in 1996 by partners Josef P. Kleihues, Jan Kleihues and Norbert Hensel. There are now nearly 80 people on the payroll at locations in Berlin, Dülmen-Rorup and Münster. The practice offers “contemporary timeless designs” for cultural venues, offices and residential construction and in the fields of retail, education/research and health care. Projects range from architecture and urban planning to interior design and landscaping

J. Mayer H.

J. Mayer H. has garnered international awards for projects at the intersection between architecture, communication and new technology. In urban designs, buildings, installations and objects, the relationship between the human body, technology and nature forms the background for a new production of space. The practice was founded in Berlin by Jürgen Mayer H. in 1996. Andre Santer and Hans Schneider joined as partners in January 2014.

Neuner & Böving

Roland Böving has been based in Berlin since 2019 as an independent planner and conceptual originator. Carbon-free blueprints and carbon-free architecture are at the heart of his work. He collaborates with partners on solutions to mitigate climate change using ecological building materials and modern design. Christina Neuner studied architecture and urban design at FH Potsdam. In 2022 she teamed up with Alice Gelety in Berlin to open their practice Neuner Gelety. Their projects include the construction of housing and public buildings as well as interior design.

Something Fantastic

Something Fantastic was founded in 2010 by Elena Schütz, Julian Schubert and Leonard Streich in the belief that in a global, urbanised world architecture relates to everything else and that practice should reflect the social, environmental and political responsibility implied by that fact. Their interdisciplinary work includes conceiving and designing books, exhibitions, furniture and buildings as well as urban design, research and teaching.

Exhibition texts

About this exhibition

In the full throes of the Cold War, a number of striking big buildings emerged in West Berlin as locations for research, education and the arts. Prominent examples are the International Congress Centre (ICC Berlin), the former Institute of Hygiene and Microbiology and nearby Central Animal Labs (“Mäusebunker”) at the Freie Universität Berlin, and the tower restaurant in Steglitz better known as the “Bierpinsel”.

These structures still spring surprises with their futuristic shapes, modern materials and functional complexity. The architecture, as generous as it is unusual, was designed to showcase technical potential and express optimism about the future. Besides, these buildings were intended to uphold the city’s competitive credentials in the international arena.

If at first they were icons of progress, later they were derided as cumbersome and inefficient. No refurbishment was carried out for several decades. Nowadays they are valued again for their architecture and as testimonies to their day. On ecological grounds, moreover, it makes sense to think about preserving them. This exhibition considers the past, present and future of the four buildings. In addition to design and construction material from the period, some never displayed before, we feature responses by Matthias Hoch, Tracey Snelling and Nathan Eddy, whose takes on the architecture are rooted in our own time. Also on show are recent blueprints for the potential conversion and future use of these buildings, once again a matter for debate in Berlin.

Prologue

In the 1970s, after entire neighbourhoods had been (re)constructed, big buildings with primarily public functions began to emerge more frequently in West Berlin. These grands projets underscored the importance to West Germany of the encircled front-line city. Most of these buildings are sturdy, their volume emphasised by materials like concrete and aluminium. Off-beat structures lent the architecture artistic plasticity. They were equipped with the latest costly technology, often showcased as a design element.

No single label has yet been devised for this architecture, visible in East and West alike on the cusp between post-war modernism and postmodernism. Some variations have been classified as brutalist or high-tech. All of them embody the promise of modern technology. The lavish deployment of seemingly unlimited resources reflected a belief in growth that came to an end with the oil crisis of 1973 – although the issue had attracted some criticism from the outset. It is because they are such impressive symbols of a bygone age and its ideals that these buildings now constitute a valuable yet complicated heritage.

International Congress Centre – ICC Berlin

When the ICC opened in 1979, it was the most expensive post-war building in Germany. It was competing directly with the Palace of the Republic in East Berlin and even today it is the biggest congress centre in Europe. With its multi-functional spaces and cutting-edge technology, the structure by Ralf Schüller and Ursulina Schüller-Witte set new standards in the conference business. A bridge ensured indoor access to the trade fair site across the road. Road vehicles had fast access to the two multi-storey car parks – the one at the southern end now awaits demolition.

The aluminium mantle, the detailing of the interior design and the sheer dimensions made this building a magnet that has always sparked both fascination and loathing. Some see the ICC as a unique flagship for high-tech architecture, firmly inscribed into Berlin’s urban history. Others are disturbed by its industrial, hermetic appearance and indulgent use of space. By the time it closed down in 2014, the ICC had brought in more than 11 million visitors. It later served temporary functions as a refugee hostel, an arts venue and a vaccination centre. Since 2019 it has been a listed monument. A conceptual procedure currently underway will determine its future by 2026.

Tower restaurant in Steglitz (“Bierpinsel”)

The tower restaurant in Steglitz lends architectural expression to faith in technical progress and a post-war vision for the city that favoured mobility. Its colourful, compact volume visibly marks a transport node where underground rail, the street (Schloßstraße) and a motorway slip road cross at different levels. Originally Ralf Schüller and Ursulina Schüller-Witte had only been asked to build a two-storey station for the underground line. They were themselves the driving force behind the idea of erecting a tower to signal the urban significance of the

place. And so, from 1972 until 1976, one of the quirkiest buildings in Berlin took shape – the bright red “beer brush” (a local nickname) offered motorway views over coffee and cake or a pint of Berliner Kindl.

The colour scheme changed during a street art event while refurbishment was carried out in 2010. Soon afterwards the building closed down. The present owner plans to use the “Bierpinsel” for offices, but also for a new restaurant. The investor wants a green, planted façade and intends to transform the tower into a “tree for the future”. This philosophy echoes earlier organic designs by Schüler & Schüler-Witte that were never implemented.

Institute of Hygiene and Microbiology Central Animal Labs (“Mäusebunker”)

The Institute of Hygiene and Microbiology and the Central Animal Labs in Lichterfelde were built for the Freie Universität Berlin. They were part of a political strategy to create a research hub in West Berlin, which had a weak economic base. The two buildings, linked by an underground tunnel, also reference each other in formal ways: both teams of architects – Fehling+Gogel and G+M Hänska – chose fair-faced concrete, which was popular at the time. They valued the honesty and sculptural quality of the material, although the two designs put it to very different use.

The imminent demolition of both buildings, which now belong to the Charité university hospital, was halted by civic campaigners in the spring of 2020. The former institute was listed as a total art work in 2021 and will form part of a new research campus. The future of the animal labs, which have stood empty since 2020, remains unclear. Options to convert the structure, whose fame has spread well beyond the boundaries of Berlin, are currently being explored both by the private sector and through an innovative model procedure launched by the Berlin State Heritage Authority.

Label **texts**

Technology and space at the ICC

The ICC had more than 80 rooms for hosting congress events, symposia, concerts and shows. The linchpin was Hall 1 with a capacity of 5,000. One feature was inspired by the Kremlin Palace in Moscow: combining it with Hall 2 opposite produced an amphitheatre for 7,000 people. Ursulina Schüler-Witte devised a way to convert it into a banqueting hall by hoisting the seats up into the ceiling. This and other technical subtleties kept a team of sometimes over 100 people busy at the offices of the architect duo. To shield the ICC from traffic noise, one building was encased within another: the outer mantle rests on neoprene bearings with a frame of striking staircases that function like the piers of a bridge.

The ICC as a total art work

Visitors to the ICC still encounter an idiosyncratic world with countless foyers, landings and mezzanines. Metal, glass and plastic are the dominant materials and rounded forms prevail. The endless circles in the carpet became a hallmark. An ingenious signage and information system, rather like the ones at airports, was composed from red and blue neon ribbons by Frank Oehring. His “Big Light Sculpture” stands centre stage in the foyer. It culminates in the glass control unit where the building services and all the congress machinery are managed. The technology and design fuse with the architecture to create a total art work.

Ideas for the ICC in the Berliner Morgenpost, 2014

When the ICC closed down in 2014, the newspaper Berliner Morgenpost invited well-known architects based in the capital to come up with ideas for breathing new life into the building. All these solutions share a desire to preserve the building in form: Barkow Leibinger fill the 800,000 cubic meters with stacks of modular dwellings around a central atrium garden where the roof opens in warm weather. Kleihues + Kleihues prefer to leave the ICC as a congress venue, adding a cylindrical hotel almost 140 metres tall in the same shimmering silver. Jürgen Mayer H. wants to save the endangered building from demolition for now by camouflaging it in “razzle dazzle”.

Bureau N and Something Fantastic: ICC

The ICC – International Centre for Contemporary Culture is a blueprint for renewal. The communications agency Bureau N and the architects at Something Fantastic are seeking to preserve the building as a public space for the people of Berlin where congress life comes together with the arts, cultural activity and technology. The authors appreciate the ingenious, flexible infrastructure and want to adapt it for a sustainable future. The heat generated by a server farm, for example, would provide warm water for a swimming pool on the roof. In 2021 the ICC became a temporary stage for the arts when the Berliner Festspiele opened it up briefly for performances and events. The proposal could be financed, as Schüler & Schüler-Witte had already suggested, by replacing the multi-storey car park with a hotel.

Expressions of interest in 2019

In 2019 the Federal State of Berlin launched a European procedure inviting expressions of interest in the future of the ICC. The purpose was to assess the “marketability” of the building and to find private investors for its rehabilitation and subsequent use. The aim was to retain it as a congress venue for up to 8,000 participants. 13 different proposals for conversion and adaptive use were submitted. The finalist was a blueprint from Christina Neuner and Roland Böving for a carbon-free transformation of the structure. A two-stage procedure is currently being set up in order to harvest conceptual input. Ideas can then be submitted until April 2025. The decision on awarding a 99-year leasehold is scheduled for 2026.

Neuner & Böving:

Making the ICC carbon-free

In the blueprint from Neuner & Böving the ICC is reborn as an International Climate Campus. There would be room in the old congress venue to accommodate over 10,000 students, while a newbuild replacing the multi-storey car park would house research institutes. The roof over the campus creates a biosphere for lush vegetation. This sheath also provides heat, air and even power from integrated solar cells. This ICC is carbon-free. And where traffic speeds past today, green spaces could be built above the motorway for the benefit of Berlin residents. This is a response by Neuner & Böving to the structure’s difficult location within the urban fabric.

Graft: M.ICC

Graft Architects submitted a proposal during the 2019 procedure for expanding the congress venue into a Mobility Innovation Convention Centre (M.ICC). This would be a hub for discussing and testing mobility technologies for the future with options to include a museum for the history of motor sports, a mobility theme park, EV charging stations and an automated parcel centre. The Graft blueprint taps into a defining characteristic of the building: its integration into flows of road traffic along Messedamm and the urban motorway and the light rail network. The central auditorium in Hall 1 would make way for greater spatial flexibility.

Ralf Schüler’s ideas for the “Bierpinsel”

Ralf Schüler and Ursulina Schüler-Witte spent a long time trying to find an investor so that they could implement their idea for a tower at the traffic node in Steglitz. Meanwhile their plans underwent many changes. The duo created a motivational brochure demonstrating various use options. Apart from a casino, a gallery or offices – which are back on the agenda today – the tower could have featured an airship museum. Ralf Schüler had watched a zeppelin flying over Berlin as a child and had been intrigued ever since by the technology and the aesthetic. The “Bierpinsel”, with its aluminium cladding and oblique lower windows, bears visible resemblance to an airship cockpit.

Tracey Snelling

Artist Tracey Snelling takes on notorious Berlin buildings in her multi-media sculptures. Among them are the “Bierpinsel”, the “Mäusebunker” and the Neues Kreuzberger Zentrum at Kottbusser Tor, which is near Snelling’s studio at Künstlerhaus Bethanien – all of them buildings that trigger associations for many people in Berlin and even beyond. The artist probes the atmosphere of these architectures with a cross between accuracy and exaggeration, not least by adding screens and light projections of her own. Snelling’s fancily trashy models are portraits of urban locales bearing the scars of time and charged with emotions, memories and unresolved political issues.

Fehling+Gogel: Floor plan flow analysis

The former Institute of Hygiene and Microbiology at the Freie Universität Berlin is a graphic specimen of architecture by Hermann Fehling and Daniel Gogel: it sprawls sideways like a constructed landscape. The diversity of curving and interlocking forms reinforces

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the organic feel and lends the concrete structure a lively elegance. When Fehling+Gogel designed buildings, they did not begin by imagining the façade but from the inner core outwards. Their analyses of floor plans indicate how they were guided by functions and the internal flows that these generated. The architectural drawing gradually turns into an abstract image that can be read in the context of contemporary Concrete Art.

b+ (bplus.xyz): Mäusebunker CC

Given the erstwhile function of the “mouse bunker”, the nickname sounds quite benign: the animals once kept and bred here for scientific experiments would never see the light of day. The symbolic architecture by G+M Hänska demonstratively highlights the need to isolate the building from its surroundings. The conversion blueprint, which combines social, environmental and economic factors, is mooted by bplus.xyz (b+) as a possible option for the preservation of such challenging building stock. Funded artists’ studios and workshops would rub shoulders here with spaces for new forms of community living – a prototype for the coexistence of human and non-human uses in the city.

“Mäusebunker Model Procedure”

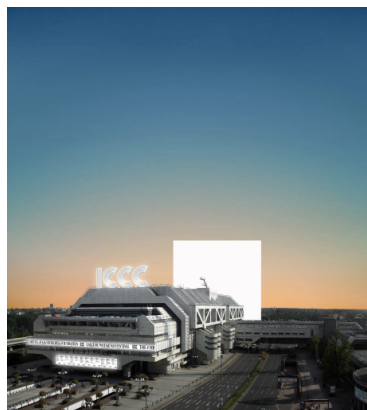
The architecture of the former Central Animal Labs has acquired an international reputation as an object lesson in brutalism. To determine the structure’s future, the Berlin Heritage Authority partnered with the Charité university hospital and the Senate Department for Urban Development, Building and Housing to launch a “Mäusebunker Model Procedure” and since 2021 some 60 experts from different fields have met at four interdisciplinary workshops to explore the challenges and potential for this vacant complex. The process is generating not only ideas for future use but also recommendations on how to implement them. The findings will be presented on 30 June 2023 at an event to accompany this exhibition.

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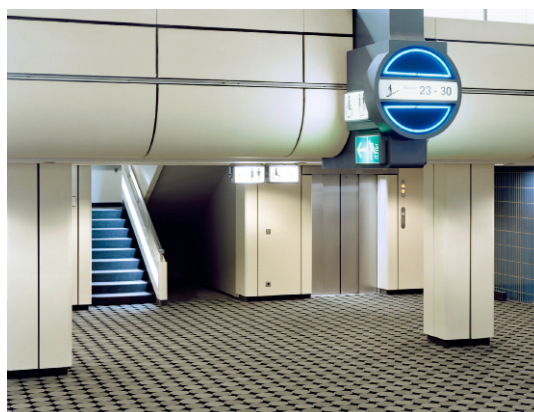
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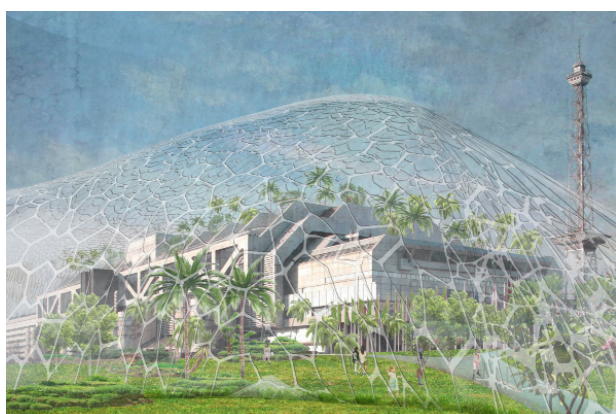
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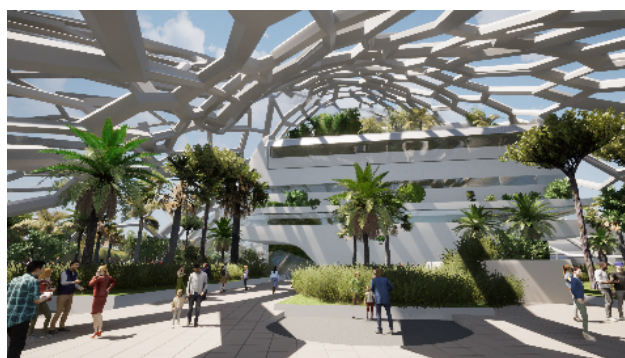
GRAFT, M.I.C.C. Mobility Innovation Congress Center, 2019 © GRAFT GmbH



Matthias Hoch, ICC #1, Berlin, 2009 © VG Bild-Kunst, Bonn 2023



Humboldt-Biosphäre - International Climate Campus, 2019-2023 © Roland Böving und Christina Neuner



Humboldt-Biosphäre - International Climate Campus, 2019-2023 © Roland Böving und Christina Neuner

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Tracey Snelling, Mausebunker, 2021 © courtesy Tracey Snelling, courtesy Tracey Snelling und Studio la Città, Verona, Foto: Peter Rosemann



bullahuth Fotografie, Mausebunker, 2023 © bullahuth



Kay Fingerle, Institut für Hygiene und Mikrobiologie von Fehling+Gogel, 1969-74, Außenansicht, 2020 © Kay Fingerle



Kay Fingerle, Mausebunker, aus der Serie: Out of Homestories, 2020 © Kay Fingerle



Tracey Snelling, Bierpinsel, 2023 © courtesy Tracey Snelling, Pulpo Gallery, München und Aeroplastics Contemporary, Brüssel, Foto: Peter Rosemann



Tracey Snelling, Bierpinsel, 2023 © courtesy Tracey Snelling, Pulpo Gallery, München und Aeroplastics Contemporary, Brüssel, Foto: Peter Rosemann



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