

# DAMN

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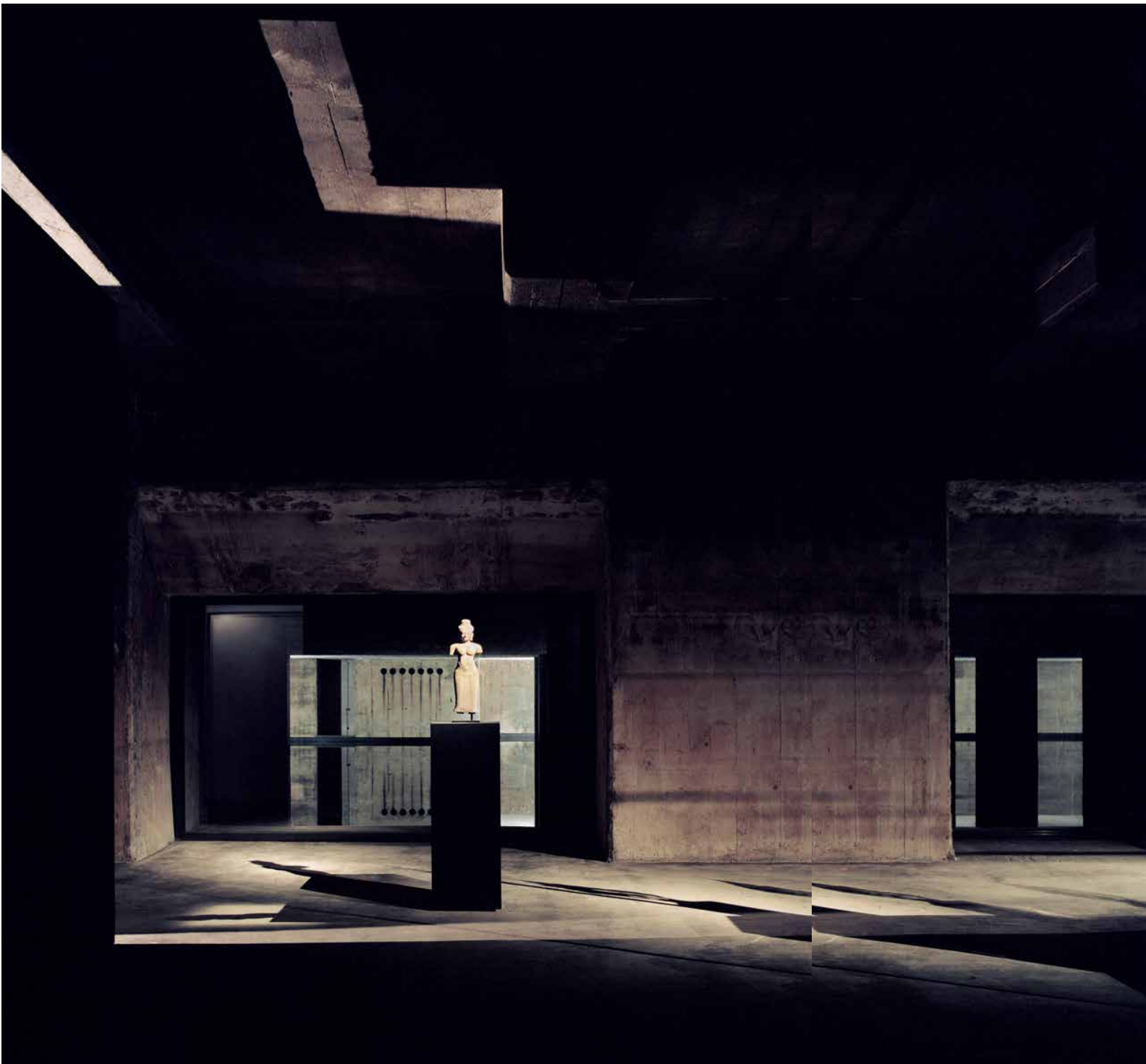
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# PAST INTO PRESENT

*Friederike von Rauch unfurls the silence*

Friederike von Rauch photographs buildings. It can be a complete building or merely a detail, a building on its own or within its surroundings, the interior or the exterior. Her photographs are meticulously stylised, the framing and the angle chosen with care. There is also a decided play of lines and often a decided contrast between concrete-grey planes and vibrant colour. According to the artist her work is not so much about buildings, rather it's about spaces. She looks for spots that to her are exceptional but that most people walk past without so much as a glance. This project contains all the ingredients she holds dear...

TEXT Sandra Hofmeister  
PHOTOS Friederike von Rauch





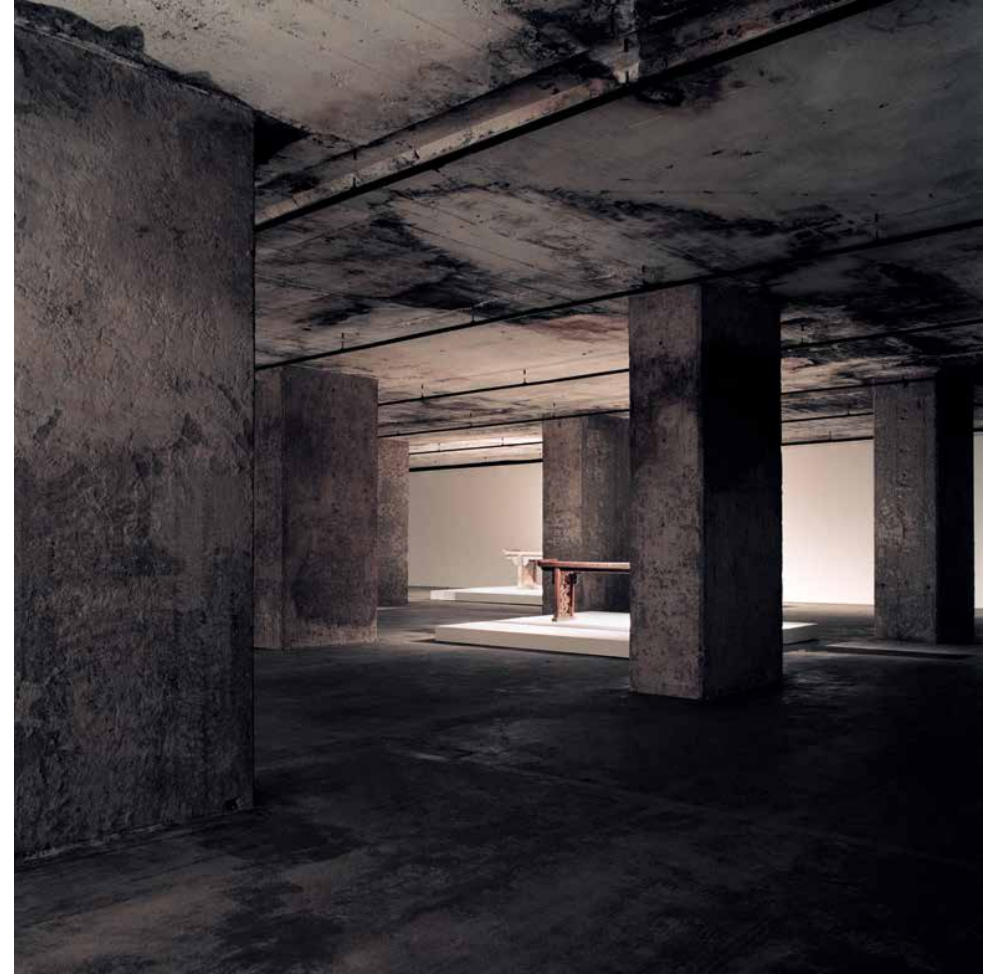
The one-metre-thick walls reveal traces of the bunker's former life / The Feuerle Collection 6

Sketch by John Pawsion

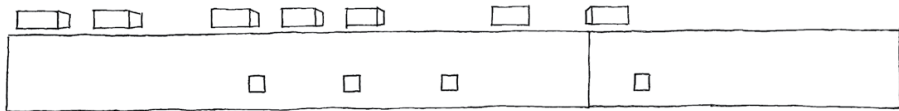
Several bunkers in Germany have been transformed over the past few years. Once powerful wartime relics, they've become luxury apartments, fancy gallery spaces, or lively cultural centres. Their metre-thick walls could have an intimidating effect, but not for Friederike von Rauch. The Berlin photographer spent four summer days in the telecommunications bunker at Hallesches Ufer in Berlin-Kreuzberg. Dressed in a warm winter jacket and equipped with her medium format camera, she slowly became used to the darkness inside the space. "Every time I went there it was a new experience", she says. "When I was working I completely forgot that I was in a bunker. The silence is striking."

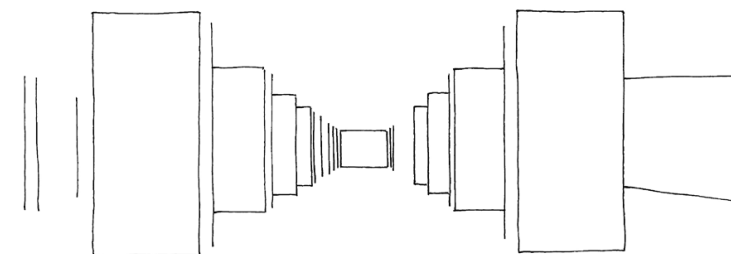
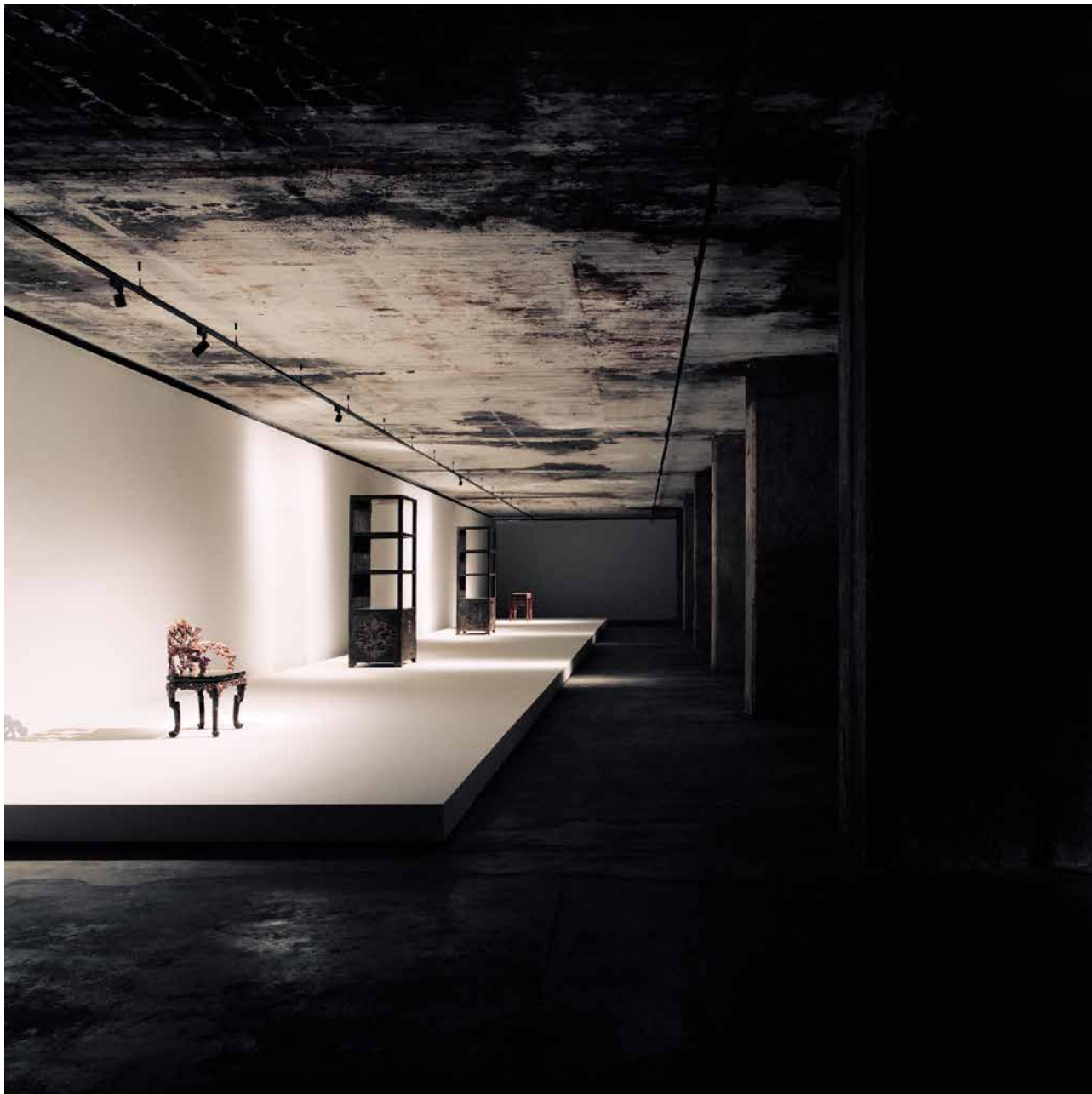
After the intervention of British architect John Pawsion, this former Nazi fortification is now a private museum housing The Feuerle Collection. In two vast, windowless halls, Khmer sculptures (7th to 13th century) in stone, bronze, and wood are displayed together with works from contemporary art-

ists Anish Kapoor, Adam Fuss, Nobuyoshi Araki, and others, and Chinese furniture from the Han Dynasty (200 BC to the 18th century). "To me, all these pieces of furniture are sculptures", says Désiré Feuerle, the German collector and connoisseur of Asian art. For several years he has been looking for a space for the exceptional collection that juxtaposes antiques with contemporary artworks – be it in Germany or somewhere else. The decayed bunker in Berlin was perfect for the purpose, with its arcane spaces that completely concentrate on themselves and tune out any urban context. But the intervention to change the bunker into a museum space was a challenging task: "It is difficult to think of places more charged with atmosphere than these monumental concrete structures. They fall very much into the category of engineered architecture, of the sort that so appealed to Donald Judd", remarks John Pawsion. Instead of focusing on pristine surfaces, the architect considered a series of subtle interventions that remain almost invisible but intensify the quality of the spaces.



In the windowless spaces, the furniture pieces in the collection become abstract sculptures / The Feuerle Collection 8



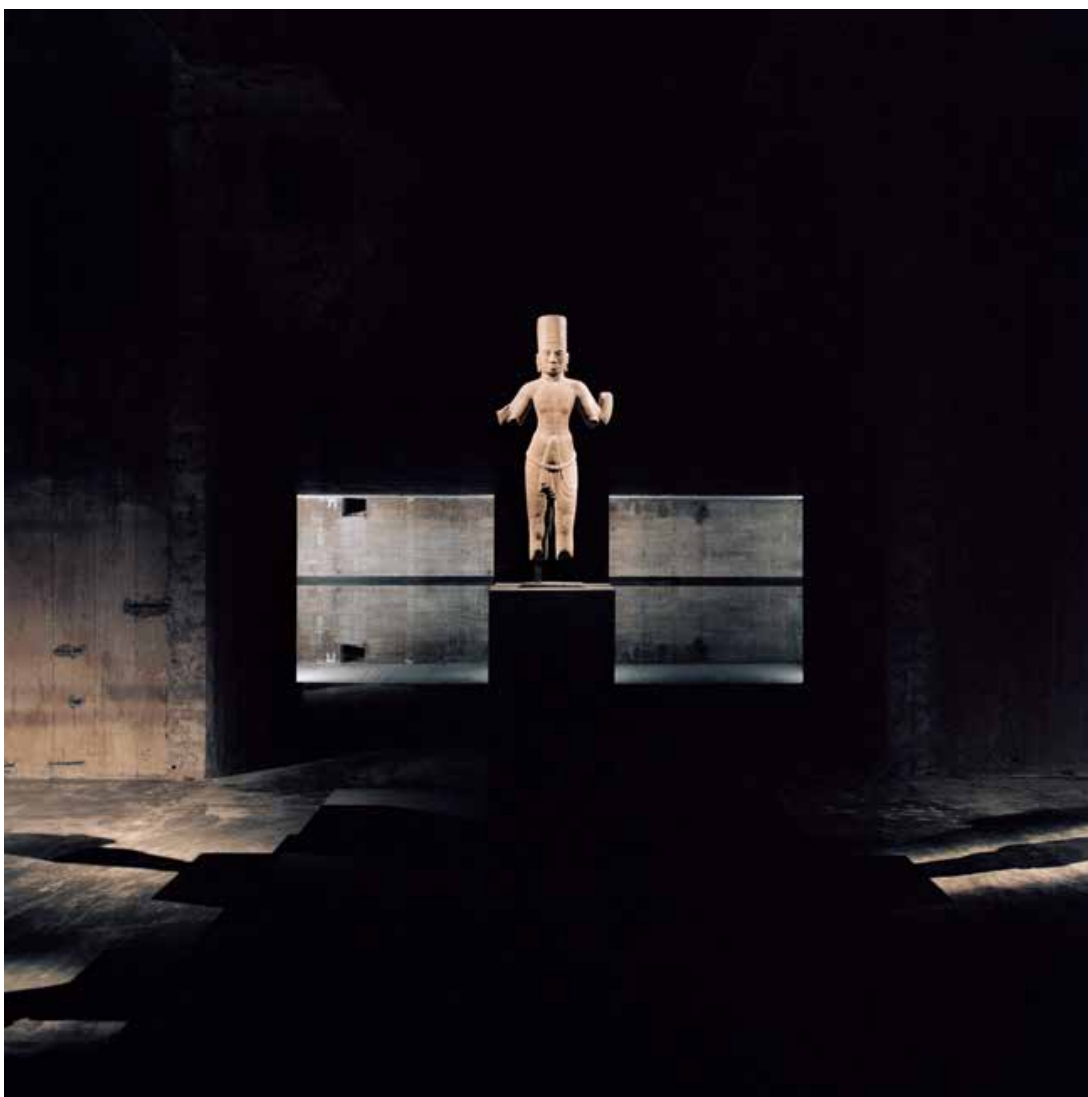


The bunker dates from 1942-44 and was never in use during wartime. Fabricated from concrete poured on site, the walls are two metres thick and the ceilings even thicker. The passage of time has made its mark on the fabric of the building, which belonged to post-war East Germany. "We can only guess what happened in here", says Petra Petersson from Realarchitektur, John Pawson's partner office in Berlin. In the upper hall of the bunker, traces of graffiti and paint splatters are reminiscent of the former life of the long-term abandoned spaces. In contrast, the basement level is all black; there must have been a fire at some point. A large window separates the exhibition space from the Lake Room – a lower, completely flooded hall that shows a mysterious black sea, just like in a fairy tale.

Axes of the lower exhibition hall / The Feuerle Collection 7

Sketch by John Pawson

◀ Carved chair with Lingzhi motifs, early Qing dynasty (17th century) / Imperial black lacquered bookcases with gold tracery dragon motifs, China, 16th-17th century / The Feuerle Collection 11



Friederike von Rauch works without artificial light – her analogue photographs fuse the shadows and the darkness of the spaces together with the power of the artworks that unfold freely in the impressive halls of the bunker. The artist approached the exhibition spaces in a careful, quiet way, her eye on the silent effect of the pieces. “I have never worked under similar dramatic lighting conditions”, she informs. Her photographs show the timelessness of Asian-god sculptures while measuring the proportions of antique wooden furniture, combining their narrative with that of the spaces in which they are displayed. The story the photographer tells in her work draws no conclusion, but it uncovers many associations that make The Feuerle Collection and its new Berlin home enchanting. •

Harihara Pre Khmer polished  
hard-stone, Pre-Angkor, 7th-8th  
century /The Feuerle Collection 3

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