

## **GroßDruckBelastungskörper (HighPressureLoadBody)**

What also began with the pictorial work was the delving into prevailing modes of perception, the intellectual, unconscious and mental foundations of our culture. My interest in historical processes also came to the fore.

The cityscape of Berlin, which in 1987 was still impressively marked by these interactions, contributed to this.

On my expeditions through the city I came upon the *GroßDruckBelastungskörper* (*HighPressureLoadBody*), a relict of plans to redesign Berlin, the former capital of the Third Reich. This structure was built in 1941 in the vicinity of the Kolonnenbrücke, where it still stands today. As a natural scale experiment, it simulated the weight of a buttress of “Bauwerk T” (the triumphal arch) to test the weight-bearing capacity of marly soil layers. The structure weighs 12,500 tonnes and is cast in massive concrete, except for the central measuring compartments. Its function is to exert a load. It is a pure weight which soil mechanics call “dead load”.

The shape and size of the *HighPressureLoadBody* are defined by the specific weight of reinforced concrete and (after 1942) sand-blasted concrete, because steel was needed in arms production. This mark in time can be retraced when looking at the weathering of the top half of the structure.

In my opinion, this structure shows the initial gesture of our culture – individualising, abstracting, symbolising.

It is a purely self-referential body without attributes referring to a context, an environment, or signifying any kind of connectedness whatsoever.

As an illustrative model and the representation of an extreme, undiluted, monotonous physicality to which the world of ideas stands in unmediated contrast, it appears as a gigantic symbol of the division in the occidental tradition of thought between mind and matter, which is the prerequisite for totalitarian, rigid, bloc-oriented thought and action.

Form and function, appearance and purpose, all appear equally vacuous. The building is like an unconsciously made statement on the entire state of mind of the National Socialist ideology.

In the end, thinking about these issues re-enlivened the climate of my youth in which the Auschwitz trials in 1963 led to the awareness that everything possesses a perverse variant, that an oven can also be something else, that a beastly detail could be attached to a lamp – hence, an ambivalence entered into my life that I later saw manifested in the ‘swimming basins’ in the main camp in Auschwitz – it made me nauseous.

These forms of practiced ambivalence, the cynical attribution of concepts and the resulting symbolic systems, the ambiguity of concept and actual object, later guided me in regard to the questions addressed in *BAUI*.