SHARP EDGES OF THE HORIZON:
A FISSURE BETWEEN “OPENNESS” AND “EMPTINESS”
ON THE TEMPELHOHER Feld IN BERLIN

BY

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THESIS

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ABSTRACT

The former fields and runways of the Tempelhof Airport in Berlin, Germany, have layered histories. The nearly two-square-mile area served as a late nineteenth-century agricultural field, fair ground, twentieth-century German military base, concentration camp, US military base, and airport, before being opened as a park in 2010. This thesis looks at the contestation surrounding twenty-first century proposals for future use and development of the park space, including the role that contemporary site-specific art has played in negotiating this terrain. By offering spaces for collective and public discussion, these artistic actions and temporary installations cultivate the continuance of the strong civic engagement that opened Tempelhof as a park and has kept it open.

This thesis problematizes discourses that render the park space as both “open” and “empty.” When open and empty are conflated, it risks erasing the multivalent histories and uses that have defined Tempelhof in the past and suggest ways to move forward. Analysis of artworks produced for the site offers a mechanism to further read its historical layers and contributes to the continuing art-historical exploration of land art and urban settings. The Plattenvereinigung (Pre-Fab) project space on Tempelhof’s southern runway offers a unique vantage point to work with a fissure between the terms of open and empty.
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INTRODUCTION

Open space. Wilderness. A seemingly endless horizon. These qualities are surprising as characterizations of an urban environment. Yet the fields and remaining runways of the former Tempelhof Airport complex in Berlin, Germany, frequently inspire such description, with a relatively flat plane of pathways and fields offering extended views of a horizon line (Figure 1).¹ This location is also frequently chosen as a site for artistic actions. This thesis considers the problem of working with the contemporary site-specific artworks on Tempelhof, whose present-day narratives too frequently offer an abridged reading of its historical layers.²

The nearly two-square-mile area of Tempelhof lies south of the geographic center of Berlin, but still within the bounds of the central city ring (Figure 2). The neighborhoods of Tempelhof, Schöneberg, Kreuzberg, and Neukölln converge around what was an agricultural field in the late nineteenth century. The space has been used as a fairground, as a testing site for early balloon and motorized flights, and, in the 1920s, as grounds for a small airport. When the larger airport constructed on the same site in the 1930s closed in 2008, jurisdiction was transferred to the Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt, Berlin’s City Senate Committee on Urban Development and the Environment. After great pressure from citizens of

¹ In this paper I will use “Tempelhof” to refer to the current park space, most commonly referred to as the Tempelhof Field (Tempelhofer Feld). “Tempelhof” names both the neighborhood west and south of the field, and the current park space under discussion. The former Tempelhof airport (ehemaliger Flughafen Tempelhof), also refers to the park in its entirety, also including the remaining, non-operational airport building (ehemalige Flughafengebäude); For Figure 1 and subsequent images, please see “Appendix A: Illustrations” beginning on page forty-four.
² By site-specific artistic practice I refer to the creation of artwork that cannot be separated from the location where it is placed or performed. See Miwon Kwon, One Place After Another: Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002).
Tempelhof’s surrounding neighborhoods, they opened the former runways and fields as a park in 2010 (Figures 3–5). The City Senate held a competition to gather proposals to develop the park space, and in May of 2014 the most favored submissions were put to vote in a public referendum. None of the plans passed. Citizens instead voted for continuing negotiations with the Senate to maintain the park as open to free use. These initiatives included strong public and government support for sustainable use through ecologically minded land preservation. Guidelines for the sustainable use of the park space further support the site’s preservation by requiring that the myriad of park activities be temporary and mindful of the land. Even organized gardening occurs only above ground in boxed containers. Large areas of preserved grassland occupy the areas between the north and south runways and their connective ring routes, while designated areas for recreational activities and barbecuing are set to the park’s edges. Park activities, albeit temporary, are numerous. They include dog runs, biking, rollerblading, land windsurfing, organized and recreational sports, motor races, music festivals, and temporary public artworks.

The rhetoric surrounding the park’s uses further exemplifies a desire to read the site as an indeterminant space. Tempelhof is spoken of as “open” and “free,” even “like a trip to the countryside, without having to leave the city.”3 The nearly flat plane of the park has been considered by some as so empty and uneventful that one proposal in the 2014 referendum

suggested burying it entirely to give the city “something it doesn’t have”—a fabricated mountain over three-thousand-feet tall. Tempelhof is assumed to be an “empty space.” Its appeal as an attraction is as a place of leisure bound only by “wind and asphalt.” Further, guests of this space are termed “pioneers” in both city documentation and popular publication. These pioneers “discover” the open field: their gardens are “pioneer gardens,” their organized events are “pioneer projects.”

Like other sites of urban ruin rendered destinations for tourism, such as Detroit or other historically fraught sites in Berlin, this rhetoric of pioneering empty space belies the more troublesome layers of the landscape’s history. During the Second World War, an early concentration camp and barracks housing forced laborers who built aviation machinery were constructed adjacent to the small airport built in the 1920s. This work supported operations in

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4 Rolf Lautenschläger, *Das Tempelhofer Feld* (Berlin: L&H Verlag, 2014), 12; Nikolai Roskamm, “4,000,000 m² of Public Space: The Berlin ‘Tempelhofer Feld’ and a Short Walk with Lefebvre and Lacau,” in *Public Space and the Challenges of Urban Transformation in Europe*, ed. Aglaée Degros, Sabine Knierbein, and Ali Madanipour (New York: Routledge, 2014), 63, 67. The proposal was entitled *Prozessuale Stadtentwicklung* (Process-Oriented Development). The mountain would near a height of about 3514 feet (1,071 m).

5 Roskamm, “4,000,000 m² of Public Space,” 66.


7 The city of Detroit, Michigan, known for its thriving twentieth-century auto industries is in the twenty-first century, most frequently addressed as a wasteland. For more on its urban farming movement thriving in the wake of the collapse of its auto industries, see: Terri Weissman, “Detroit’s Edible Gardens: Art and Agriculture in a Post-Environmental World,” in “Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology” online supplement to special issue, *Third Text* 120 (Jan 2013), http://www.thirdtext.org/domains/thirdtext.com/local/media/images/medium/weissman_t_detroits_edible_gardens_cc.pdf; Berlin’s urban transformation park projects include the Park am Gleisdreieck, that, like Tempelhof, is now managed by Grün Berlin GmbBh. Its other management and development projects include the Mauerpark (formed by the no-man’s-land areas on either side of a former section of the former Berlin Wall) and the 23-hectare portion of the Plänterwald known as the Spreepark, a former amusement park (1992–2001). See the website of the Grün Berlin Gruppe, https://gruen-berlin.de/tempelhofer-feld, and Christopher Flade, “Neuer ‘Rummel’ ab 2016,” http://www.berliner-spreepark.de/.

the monumental airport terminal building, built as the pride of Nazi National Socialism and still standing at the northwest corner of Tempelhof (Figure 6). After the terminal fell under control of the US Air Force in 1945, Tempelhof was used as the base for the Airlifts of 1948–49 and as the landing point for supplies flown into what was then West Berlin. The rhetoric of the present-day park space draws its narrative from this transfer of power and the airlifts to “freedom.” It continues to trumpet the monumentality of the terminal building without dwelling on its proximity to the former concentration camp and forced labor sites. The monumental terminal building, which temporarily housed refugees from former East Berlin during the Airlifts, today holds several business offices and is preserved as a historical heritage site open for guided tours of the terminal area, the former air raid shelters, and the indoor basketball court and bowling alley installed by the US Air Force. As of the fall of 2015, these tours no longer include access to the terminal wings due to their conversion into temporary housing for asylum seekers. As of this March, this includes the installation of housing containers adjacent to the terminal wings.9

Present-day uses both renew and extrapolate difficult questions of histories of internment and refugee on Tempelhof.

Like Berlin itself—a city divided into “East” and “West” in 1961 and then reunified in 1989—Tempelhof has undergone its most intense and rapid transformation in the twentieth and

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9 Website of the Tempelhofer Projekt GmbH, “Bücherei für Flüchtlinge Eröffnet,” April 29, 2016, http://www.thf-berlin.de/aktuelles/neuigkeiten/artikel/buecherei-fuer-fluechtlinge-eroeffnet/. The brevity of this conversion remains questionable, as evidenced by the opening of an “Asylotheke,” a combination of the words Asyl (asylum) and Bibliothek (library). At the time of its opening, it was one of seventy-six in Germany; Website of the Demokratische Initiative 100% Tempelhofer Feld e.V.—THFG, “Aktuelles,” http://www.thf100.de/start.html. This website was used to coordinate previous referendums concerning the field. The “News” links on its homepage currently display a flurry of articles (March 2017, taz, Berliner Zeitung, Tagesspiegel, Berliner Woche) on the addition of housing containers outside of the terminal wings.
twenty-first centuries because of attempts by competing regimes of control to dictate interpretation of the entire site as a single unit. The opening of Tempelhof as a park holds potential for the stories layered into its every corner to speak without allegiance to prior regimes. This openness supports a multiplicity of interpretations of the present field space. My project addresses the rendition of Tempelhof as both open and empty. When open and empty are conflated, it risks erasing the multivalent histories and uses that have defined Tempelhof in the past and suggest ways to move forward.

What then is the difference between open and empty? And what purpose does it serve to conceive of the space as either one or the other? How can artwork enacted in this environment uniquely support and embody this multiplicity? The former Tempelhof airport terminal building is protected as a heritage site and has been the subject of much scholarly attention, especially by architectural historians and urban planners. My project directs attention instead to activity in the form of temporary artworks on the “empty” fields and runways of the park. Artistic actions in public areas are not only affected by concerns of site transformation, but can help us think critically about imagining and enacting multivalent uses of public spaces that have complex and contested historical layers.

10 Sonja Dümpelmann, “Between Science and Aesthetics: Aspects of ‘Air-minded’ Landscape Architecture,” Landscape Journal 29:2–10 (2010), 161–78. Alan Tate, review of “Airport Landscape: Urban Ecologies in the Aerial Age,” Landscape Journal 32.2 (2013), 309–10. Contemporary historical work on German landscapes, and specifically airport landscapes include Harvard University’s Graduate School of Design’s November 2013 conference entitled “Airport Landscape,” organized by Dümpelmann and Charles Waldheim. The organizers presented the categories of “Cultures, Infrastructures, and Ecologies,” to join consideration of European landscape architects, work by the Laboratory for Aviation and the Environment at MIT, and that of architects and cultural geographers concerned with “New Natures.” In this context, ecologies Nina-Marie Lister noted the frequent proximity of airports and wildlife preserves, while Christophe Girot of ETH Zürich discussed the alienation of passengers from airport terrain within a history of airport development and site restoration.
Part One, “‘Openness’ and the Jagged Edges of Universalisms: Precedents for Contemporary Field Use,” addresses a historical pattern of applying the term “open” that enables the application of labels of “emptiness” to Tempelhof’s fields. It considers the relationship between this conflation and the tendency to read the entire space as a single entity, to be either filled or emptied. Part Two, “Work on ‘Open’ Fields: The Plattenvereinigung and Art of the Environment for an Urban Setting,” situates this case within discourses on site-specific practices and the history of land art in an urban setting, exploring another way of reading openness that instead embraces the multivalent use of the park. Part Three, “Renegotiating Sharp Edges of the Horizon,” further applies this method to read cycles of contemporary artworks that reveal the boundaries of Tempelhof as active zones. Art of the environment of Tempelhof fuses moments of its histories with present-day experience.
PART I | “OPENNESS” AND THE JAGGED EDGES OF UNIVERSALISMS: PRECEDENTS FOR CONTEMPORARY FIELD USE

This paper turns to the first half of the twentieth century to address a pattern of applying the term “open” to Tempelhof in a way that enables the application of “emptiness” to its fields, as evidenced by the historical use of its fields. Loudspeakers were a central component of the highly orchestrated use of Tempelhof for the celebrations of May 1, 1934. A segment of an archival newsreel, entitled *Millionen folgen jedem Wort* (Millions Follow Every Word), documents the process of the production, transportation, and installation of a grid of loudspeakers to Tempelhof (Figures 9–18). The first and nearly the final frames of the newsreel display a focused view of the head of a loudspeaker set atop a pole, framed against a cloudy sky (Figure 12). The grates of the head of one such loudspeaker are placed between two concentric plates, one atop the other, separated by a horizontal gap from which sound could presumably emanate at three hundred and sixty degrees.

The opening shot is followed by a view of the field from its northeastern side. A close-up of a lone tree dwarfs the horizon of buildings viewable across the field; sunlight reflects off a runway and encircles the base of the tree, obscuring where it meets the ground. Instead, this boundary is marked by freshly cut planks of wood, likely used for the temporary construction of viewing stands and radio apparatus for the day of celebration (Figure 13). The tree appears as a lone obstruction to the full-scale utilization of the field space for event preparations. The only other trees in the newsreel appear on residential land at the edge of the field. These apartment lots come into view as the camera cuts across the field to its western edge, where a sign for the underground subway system appears among further construction (Figure 14). Loudspeakers
eclipse natural forms as prominent markers in Tempelhof’s landscape. A diagram illustrating the plan for their installation situates them as part of a grid of operational huts, a stage for speakers, and other decorations (Figure 15). This arrangement insures that members of even a large crowd will hear announcements in unison. The archival newsreel documents the achievement of a sonic and visual web of control at a grand scale. And to achieve this transformation, the entire space of the Tempelhofer Feld seems up for reworking.

The newsreel documents the realization of the event diagram in real time and space through extensive coordination of labor and materials. The physical earth of the field is made available to accommodate radio cables, loudspeaker poles, operation huts, and stands for spectators. The camera rests for a moment, and centers on a growing pile of cable, as it is contorted into a layered sequence of figure-eight loops, coaxed into place by several figures whose limbs appear within and beside the pile (Figure 16). As it unspools, two figures attend to the smooth unfurling of its coils as they are steadily hauled by another pair of figures into a trench (Figure 17). Similar work is also imaged from above (Figure 18). A line dug into the earth to insert radio cables connecting loudspeakers vertically bisects this view, and cuts across a previously demarcated pathway framing the top left-hand corner. In parallel lines near the horizontal midpoint of the frame, the ground’s surface appears subjected to perforation by evenly spaced holes and marked by mounds of earth cast aside for these preparations. These marks seem to correspond to a line of figures digging along a third parallel line across the top quarter of the image. We can imagine the repetition of this cross-section of accumulating marks and configurations of workers repeating this process until the installation plans are achieved,
realizing the gridded plan in physical form. The newsreel reveals with remarkable clarity the mechanics of a moment of unrestrained conversion of Tempelhof into a temporary arena used to magnify the transmission of controlled discourse. This attempt involves control of both physical terrain and interpretive experience.

The newsreel images only one moment in the field’s layered history. The mechanisms which enabled the highly choreographed May Day celebrations also structured histories of forced labor, imprisonment, and the construction and operation of an early concentration camp. The 1934 newsreel presents the second celebration of May Day under Nazi National Socialism, but it was the first formatted as a national holiday, with mandatory participation. This event follows a moment of dramatic reduction in freedom to self-organize. The workers in the May Day newsreel would not have been unionized, since German workers’ unions were forbidden beginning in May of 1933. Though stories of incarceration and internment existed in close proximity to celebrations on Tempelhof, the former are not made nearly as visible as the later. The construction of the Colombia-Haus (Columbia House) adjacent to the northern edge of the Tempelhof terminal building, for example, itself previously a state prison, operated as a Gestapo prison that is estimated to have processed ten thousand prisoners and as a learning ground for the then future builders of Sachsenhausen, Buchenwald, and Auschwitz. The Colombia-Haus

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12 Pollock and Bernbeck, “A Gate to a Darker World,” 139. The military prison was built in 1896.
operated a camp from 1934–36, whose barracks were erected on Tempelhof’s northern edge. In 1939, similar barracks on the northeast and eastern edges contained over four thousand German and international forced laborers. These barracks exposed their prisoners to not only the danger of interment, but also to exposure to frequent air raids that targeted Tempelhof for its central role in military aviation production.

That Tempelhof’s land could be so displaced for the construction of one May Day holiday stands in sharp contrast to contemporary agreement by park users to not further alter the field space, as well as the desire to understand it as empty. The desire for the site to remain undefined extends to any articulation of the landscape that interrupts the field’s flatness, even by natural elements. Trees in the present-day landscape of Tempelhof remain scarce. Berlin Senate documents describe its slight hills, bumps of land, and few trees as objects that “infect” the


14 Coppi, *Kein Ort der Freiheit*, 7–8. Maria Theresia Starzmann, “Excavating Tempelhof Airfield: Objects of Memory and the Politics of Absence.” *Rethinking History* 18.2 (2014): 215; Pollock and Bernbeck, “A Gate to a Darker World,” 137. Starzman was a research associate of the excavation project from June to December 2012. Nationalities of those interned included French, Soviet, and Italian, Polish, Ukrainian, Dutch, German. Before construction on the airport terminal building continued, the company Weserflug GmbH (under the Reichsluftfahrtministerium, Ministry of Aviation) utilized parts of the building as workspaces. Tempelhof became the site for the vast majority of production of a specific type of dive-bomber plane (the *Sturzkampfbomber*). Yet it is on the northeastern corner of the field where an older airport (1923) was located. This was the main headquarters for Lufthansa (founded in 1926 as Deutsche Luft Hansa AG), which used this forced labor also when working under the Luftwaffe in the main terminal building. The barracks were located alongside the older airport building.

“uncontaminated” flatness of the grassland. These natural elements, treated as incursions on airfields, are also paradoxically considered incursions on present-day ecologically protected fields. These protections also notably treat Tempelhof as one entity that remains open only to temporary events, albeit sometimes at large scales.

The International Gardening Exhibition of 2017 is an example of an event at this scale whose plans embraced open and empty fields only to find themselves in direct conflict with the site’s historical layers. Preparations for the Gardening Exhibition triggered an archaeological process of site examination by the Berlin Monument Authority (Landesdenkmalamt Berlin), which uncovered evidence of barracks from the time of the Colombia Haus. This routine process site examination and the work of a citizens group cancelled plans for the Gardening Exhibition on Tempelhof. At the same time, it prompted archaeological excavations that would otherwise be rendered impossible by further commercial development of the park’s edges. The excavations at Tempelhof by Professors Susan Pollock and Reinhard Bernbeck at the Institute of Near Eastern Archaeology of the Free University (Freie Universität) of Berlin from 2012 to 2014 focused on recovering remnants of daily life under forced labor and internment. This work unearthed objects that make visible traces of individual lives during events following the May Day celebrations in 1934, such as the Colombia Haus operations. Pollock and Bernbeck consider the excavation as a process of Sichtbarmachungen (“visualizations,” or more literally

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17 In conversation with Dr. Susan Pollock, January 2017.
18 Pollock and Bernbeck, “A Gate to a Darker World,” 143. This excavation project was a collaboration with the Berlin Landesdenkmalamt with support of the Berlin Senate for Development and Environment (Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung und Umwelt). The excavations began in the summer of 2012 and concluded in 2014, with upwards of 30,000 objects.
translated as “visible-makings”) of material otherwise unattended to, thereby “bring[ing] things to light that are incontrovertibly there.” It is telling, however, that the relocation of the Gardening Exhibition has been attributed to the land preservation efforts and promotion of citizen involvement without mention of these archaeological activities or their histories.

In the present-day rhetoric of the park, the narrative of flight is similarly exclusively linked to freedom. Collective imaginations of flight and freedom implied by Tempelhof’s present title of Tempelhofer Freiheit (“Tempelhof Freedom,” or “Liberty”) by the Berlin Senate are sourced from histories of pre-war aviation and ballooning experiments and the post-WWII Berlin Air Lifts. This narrative appears strikingly at odds with a fuller history of working on Tempelhof and sits with unease beside its histories of forced labor and internment. In Kein Ort der Freiheit (No Place of Freedom), Hans Coppi presents these histories as in direct confrontation with the park title of Tempelhofer Freiheit (Tempelhof Freedom), describing how Tempelhof’s more troublesome layers have become “disavowed” (verleugnet) and “trivialized” (verharmlost). Thomas Irmer calls them “blind spots” in its histories. The opening of Tempelhof as a park provided opportunity to make such blind spots visible, but simultaneously risked erasure through the rhetoric of pioneering an empty space. Labels of emptiness applied

19 Ibid.; In conversation with Dr. Susan Pollock, January 10, 2017.
20 Roskamm, “4,000,000 m² of Public Space,” 68.
to the urban fields of Tempelhof that offer a physical “gap” in networks of city blocks aid this erasure.\textsuperscript{24} An account for the application of labels of emptiness to this gap may lie with the tendency to read the entire space as a single entity: field, fair ground, airport, airfield, military base, park, opportunity for urban development. While such titles mark general historical shifts they do so at the level of abstracted and totalizing regimes of control that have carefully structured movement and forms of participation that could occur in the space.

The temporary yet total occupation and physical reworking of Tempelhof for the May Day events in 1934 presents a salient example of field use under one such voice of power that obfuscates the complexities and traces of daily use and lived experience of the site.

\textbf{Constructing Field Use with Multiple Voices: Friction and Naturecultures for Hybrid Landscapes}

Contemporary projects on Tempelhof do not encounter an empty pastoral landscape, but one full of tangled histories. The openness of the site can also impede access to the richness of the site, however. Revealing the friction between the various cracks and fissures in the site’s historical layers reveals a highly contested space that cannot be encapsulated by any one interpretation. The meeting of ecological concerns and fraught historical layers calls for an analytical mechanism that troubles reading any one cycle of nature or culture above others.

In her work on similarly complex and contested sites, anthropologist Anna Tsing employs the idea of \textit{friction}, a concept metaphorically repurposed from physics, as a way of

\textsuperscript{24} Raumlaborberlin, \textit{Art City Lab: Neue Räume für die Kunst} (Berlin: Jovis Verlag, 2015), 64.
working at the source of intersecting problems.\textsuperscript{25} Friction reads conflicts as if their contributing parties are metaphorically assigned to tectonic plates, whose different surfaces and acting forces meet to produce friction. Locating areas of friction involves finding the edges of where competing discourses meet, whether of social, natural, geopolitical, historical, or art-historical phenomena. In \textit{Friction}, for example, Tsing engages histories of Indonesian environmental activism that also reveals their connections, and even moments of collaboration, with major actors of environmental damage in the last quarter of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{26} Focusing on sites of friction allows Tsing to imagine new analytical solutions by working with their discordances instead of erasing them.\textsuperscript{27}

Tsing’s friction extends from Donna Haraway’s attention to fissures of both natural and cultural worlds, which she terms \textit{naturecultures}.\textsuperscript{28} Naturecultures name inherent conflicts among studies and theories of natural and cultural processes that refuse full categorization by either category.\textsuperscript{29} Their problems and potential solutions do not live in a single discursive or physical world. Tsing describes boundaries of naturecultural problems as “unruly edges” that meet in surprising ways and change.\textsuperscript{30} She unravels unruly edges of histories that meet with friction

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{25} Anna Tsing, \textit{Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection} (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), x. Tsing also describes sites of friction as “zones of awkward engagement.”
\item \textsuperscript{26} Tsing, \textit{Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection}, x.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Ibid., x, 262.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 20.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Banu Subramaniam, \textit{Ghost Stories from Darwin: The Science of Variation and the Politics of Diversity} (Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 2014), x. Subramaniam explains Haraway’s use of the term as part of a feminist science in action that refutes a binary of nature and culture which separates humans from the world at large and instead “attend[s] to the constant traffic of discourses, information, and theories between the worlds of natures and cultures.”
\end{itemize}
through tangles of technoscientific discourses from literatures of the sociologies and histories of science and technology. In *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, Tsing traces a global network of matsutake mushrooms, which grow in the wake of manmade and ecological disasters. Her process traces the life cycles of the matsutake to reveal both kinds of catastrophes as interconnected naturecultural problems.

The study of naturecultures can also become the study of cultural artifacts. Objects that bridge naturecultural boundaries become tools for working with unruly edges of histories as sites of friction. The loudspeakers installed in the May Day newsreel and the archaeological remains of the 2012–14 excavations can be considered as naturecultural objects that transverse worlds of nature and culture on Tempelhof. They occupy naturecultural boundaries. The May Day newsreel reveals with great clarity the extensive knitting of industrial objects into the land itself, but Tempelhof’s present urban park landscape incorporates many such layers. Pollock and Bernbeck read these worlds as intertwined. They consider this combination extensive enough to warrant description by the term *Machinelandschaft* (machine-landscape), a term that they apply to Tempelhof. A *Machinelandschaft* names a “landscape produced with the use of heavy machinery such as steamrollers, bulldozers, and backhoes.” Definition by these tools reveals the archaeological context of the term as well as components complicit in shaping Tempelhof’s histories of agriculture, aviation, and militarization. Naturecultural objects name placements of

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31 Ibid. Tsing follows matsutake mushrooms from Japan to Finland and the Pacific Northwest US.
33 Pollock and Bernbeck, “A Gate to a Darker World,” 141. Pollock and Bernbeck apply the term *Machinelandschaften* directly to Tempelhof.
materials at boundaries of coexisting mechanized and natural processes. They become tools to identify zones of friction and trace the associated moving components, or unruly edges, of a conflict. The opening of Tempelhof as a park facilitates potential access to a *Machinelandschaft* for twenty-first century artistic practices instead of an empty space.

The recognition of Tempelhof as a *Machinelandschaft* of multiple naturecultural objects on Tempelhof keeps our focus on the friction produced where unruly edges meet. Friction and its naturecultures help identify a strong link between the conflicting discourses of Tempelhof’s historical regimes of control and changes to its physical landscape. The goals of different historical actors feed these links. How different groups aspire to make their goals universally true is also a mechanism of friction. Tsing considers the existence of multiple such “universal aspirations” in any zone of friction as embedded in cultural dialogues, such as those of post- and neo-colonial economic liberalism. The May Day newsreel, competing interpretations of Tempelhof’s history, and current aspirations toward ecological sustainability and development all strive for universal compliance with their aspirations. Tempelhof’s histories of internment and forced labor exemplify histories of violent universal aspirations that attempted to turn multiple voices into one at the cost of erasing many. At each sharp historical edge of Tempelhof, there is much at stake for histories of remembering, forgetting, and mourning, and methods of current governance specific to the German context and its entanglements. Existence of these entangled histories is threatened by reading the present field as previously empty.

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34 Ibid.
PART II | WORK ON “OPEN” FIELDS: THE PLATTENVEREINIGUNG
AND ART OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR AN URBAN SETTING

The contemporary rhetoric of pioneering on Templehof sets up a friction between the structures that currently control the park and its previous uses. The word *pioneer* supports a rhetoric of carefree and peaceful use of a field emptied of its previous histories and anchored to the Airlifts of 1948. The German *pionier* supports this sense when defined as “someone who does something first,” or even, in the German, as a synonym for “engineer.” The word, however, could also be read as a reference the German faction of the Communist youth group—*Jungepioniere*—of the DDR, or, even more explicitly militant, it once was used to refer to a foot soldier. The present-day rhetoric of pioneering on Tempelhof, often extended to include artistic intervention, thus invites multiple senses of field use that include frictions of naturecultures, both pastoral and of a *Machinelandschaft*.

The study of park infrastructure and the artistic practices staged in this environment since its opening in 2010 allow us to see the visual and metaphorical markers of these zones of friction within the rhetoric of pioneering. Contemporary site-specific work on Tempelhof has often utilized architectural structures as sites for public art to ask questions of present-day political, social, and environmental climates. For example, the recycled temporary pavilions of *The World is Not Fair—Die Große Weltaustellung* (2012, Figure 7)—an exhibition organized by the

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architecture firm Raumlaborberlin and the Berlin theater company HAU with participation by an international sampling of architects and artists including Olafur Eliasson, Harun Farocki, and Tamer Yiğit and Branka Prlić—recall a time when Tempelhof was an agricultural field and used as a fairground. The temporary pavilions were used to house discussions and performances related to artistic actions. Some of the structures have been reused as information kiosks and rest areas for parkgoers, which exist alongside information boards about select historic events (Figures 19–21).37

Other artistic actions have included Australian artist Lauren Brincat’s single-channel color video of a meditative walk down the central runway (*This Time Tomorrow*, 2011) and the first of a series of controlled explosions by Andreas Greiner and Fabian Knecht (*ENTLADUNG*, 2012–13).38 Artworks have also extended onto the field as part of events such as the Berlin Art Week and the 48 Stunden (forty-eight hour) Neukölln district arts festival. These included Robert Montgomery’s billboards of poetry formed by LED’s (*All Our Splendid Monuments*, 2012) and Plastique Fantastique’s *Liveboat—Chapter Five* (2012), an enlarged mock-up of an inflatable raft of the kind used by migrants in crossings of the Mediterranean.39 Such spaces for collective and public discussion support continuing the strong civic engagement that opened Tempelhof as a park and has kept it open.

37 Raumlaborberlin, *Art City Lab*, 64.
The *Plattenvereinigung* (Pre-Fab) project space (2010–ongoing, Figure 8), which will be my primary contemporary example in this thesis, asks similar questions with its choice of built material, sourced from structures of former East and West Germany. This project space on the southern runway of Tempelhof provides a particularly good example of a meeting of naturecultures that supports the thesis that keeping Tempelhof open cannot occur without friction. Itself officially named a “pioneer project,” it offers a platform that troubles the limits of Tempelhof’s histories.\(^{40}\) The structure itself was constructed from portions of two existing buildings, a high-rise apartment from the former East German town of Frankfurt an der Oder and a building from the Olympic Village in Munich, formerly in West Germany. It holds the potential for limitless cycles of reconstruction, thereby serving as a teaching and learning exercise in sustainable urban renewal practices. The prefabricated samples were first joined together by teachers, students, and technicians at the Peter-Behrens-Halle of the Technical University of Berlin (Technische Universität). This process involved six phases of rotating working groups from January 2010 to May 2011. In its first iteration in the Peter-Behrens-Halle, it was described as a *Haus-im-Haus*, or a house constructed within the “house” of the indoor hall space.\(^{41}\) The structure was then disassembled and reassembled on Tempelhof.\(^{42}\)

The two-story concrete edifice of the *Plattenvereinigung* is fused to a concrete base within the surrounding asphalt, which it shares with neighboring skate park structures on

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\(^{40}\) Senate Department for Urban Development and Environment, *Tempelhofer Freiheit*, 5.
Tempelhof’s southeastern runway (Figures 23–26). Visitors to the site, when approaching from the main eastern entrance of the park, pass one site of recent archaeological work, garden colonies, and a developing garden site for recent refugees alike. The Plattenvereinigung’s physical inclusion of material history from the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich in its built form includes remnants of histories from locations beyond Tempelhof in a tour of the park, yet, after our attention to the May Day newsreel of 1934, draws our attention to another historical echo. The events recorded in the May Day newsreel preceded a second large-scale installation of similar loudspeakers on Tempelhof for the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin. The Plattenvereinigung explicitly chose to work with frictions of East and West and is notably recognized by the German UNESCO as part of the UN Decade of Education in Sustainable Development.\(^43\) This gives the structure a sense of permanence, a rare exception in the temporary artistic projects enacted on Tempelhof. Even so, it is notable that it is not marked as a permanent structure in maps of the field (Figure 5), and that it retains the potential to continue cycles of deconstruction and rebuilding by repeating the pedagogical practice of its initial construction. Its use as a space for art residencies further emphasizes a continuing temporary quality.

**Art of the Environment for an Urban Setting: Land Art, Earthworks, and Site-Specificity**

One way to interpret the Plattenvereinigung project at Tempelhof is within the history of

environmental art in urban settings. Early analyses of land art considered it to be comprised of primarily neutral actions in a distant wilderness, unconnected to urban centers, while contemporary art-historical scholarship of Miwon Kwon, Philipp Kaiser, James Nisbet, and Kelly Baum instead advocate for addressing these spaces (particularly the desert of the American West) as geopolitically entangled. Finnish critic and art historian Ossi Naukkarinnen additionally foregrounds environmental awareness and avoids a distinction between rural and urban settings. Comparative analysis of dialogues of Tempelhof’s present use with a genealogy of land art practices and site-specificity reveals a fissure between the terms of open and empty at play on Tempelhof. Within the terms of this literature, we might consider etymologies of pioneering and moments from the field’s military and industrial histories as if discursively assigned to a geopolitical desert rather than part of a pastoral oasis in the city center. We can then engage this desert along with problematic readings of emptiness to consider the present terrain of the Plattenvereinigung with an appropriate lens for art of the environment today.

Land art typically refers to the departure from traditional representations of landscape in favor of intervention into a landscape, along with documentation of that process in the form of mapping, photographic documentation, and text-based accounts. In the late 1960s and early

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1970s, such projects included Herbert Bayer’s *Earth Mound* (Aspen, Colorado, 1955), Walter de Maria’s mile long drawings in the desert and array of lightning rods, Michael Heizer’s deep trenches in the Nevada Desert, Dennis Oppenheim’s concentric rings cut into wheat fields, and Robert Smithson’s arrays of mirror “displacements,” and Smithson’s massive *Spiral Jetty* in Utah’s Great Salt Lake.\(^47\) We might consider the process of land transformation undertaken in these works as similar to that depicted in the May Day newsreel. One major point of difference lies in their forms of organized labor.

Scholarship of land art and site-specificity includes attention to different configurations of labor among artists who work with communities as part of their practice. As Miwon Kwon narrates in *One Place After Another*, early land art and earthworks led to practices that gave more careful consideration to sites and the inclusion of the artist in the local community. There was a shift from site-specific works to issue-specific works, including an increasing involvement of “real” people in the artworks as participants rather than viewers.\(^48\) Kwon further notes how the identity of the artist, the curator, the institution, and community groups experience a process of “continuous negotiation” in contemporary practices invested in such community involvement.\(^49\) This negotiation through verbal interactions offers a point of intersection with Naukkarinen’s definition of *art of the environment*.


\(^{48}\) Kwon, *One Place After Another*, 70.

\(^{49}\) Ibid., 142.
Ossi Naukkarrinen defines art of the environment as work that heightens attention to its surrounding natural and build environments and their associated politics and histories. Naukkarinen includes in this category permanently installed outdoor artworks that value a contrast with their changing surroundings, artworks that derive their meaning from inspiring verbal exchanges among viewers, and artworks adorning architecture to increase attention to its surrounding environment.\textsuperscript{50} These works can be both outdoor and indoor, with varying degrees of public access and duration of installment.\textsuperscript{51} We might think of the \textit{Plattenvereinigung} and works on Tempelhof as examples of art of the environment as opposed to site-specific works, because of the heightened attention they bring to the pastoral \textit{Machinelandschaft} of Tempelhof. This category includes their urban setting without denying environmental awareness.

Naukkarinen also highlights the overlapping goals of art of the environment with land art, community art, site-specific art, and public art.

Tempelhof’s history in the twentieth century reveals the potential for harm when this discursive field is not publicly negotiated but constructed and wielded by regimes of power. Kwon addresses this problem to some extent when she cautions against “an overgeneralized and abstract projection of commonality, a \textit{mythic} unity that gathers into its folds a range of particular persons and their experiences.”\textsuperscript{52} For her, this simplification seems to be characteristic of a

\textsuperscript{50} Naukkarinen, \textit{Art of the Environment}, 26. Nakkarinen draws support for these categories from Finish artist Markku Hakuri.
\textsuperscript{51} Ibid. Naukkarinen notes how these works are usually freely physically accessible, but can also exist in a “semi-public interior space” and acknowledges this point is echoed by Finland’s Foundation for Environmental Art.
\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 120, 126, 130. Kwon makes a distinction between artworks that engage “sited” communities and those that engage “invented” communities (both of temporary and enduring durations).
“sited” community selected to fulfill the goals of a previously conceived project.  

The variety of communities who visit Tempelhof could be considered in this way, especially when they are mythologized as pioneers. This occurs most problematically when the park is considered as one entity. Citizen referendums have had much success in creating and maintaining Tempelhof as a park, conceived of as one unit only to the extent required to facilitate an openness to a variety of self-organized uses, including temporary artistic interventions.

Reading Templehof’s temporary actions and installations as art of the environment relies on continuing this genealogy beyond the growing inclusion of the artist in community projects to include restoration projects and the overtly “environmental artist” in the late 1970s.  

These interventions gave way to works with greater attention to challenging human relationships with the land and addressing resultant problems. This shift could be exemplified by artists such as Aviva Ralmani and Basia Irland who revisit a particular “terrain” in an attempt to remedy damage. Irland’s “A Gathering of Waters” project (begun in 1995), for example, created a “river repository” as an archive of the records of performances, works, and research enacted along its 1875 miles of the Rio Grande thereby aiming to recover the history of the river and its arteries.

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53 Ibid., 121.
54 Amanda Boetzkes, The Ethics of Earth Art (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), 35. She cites Betty Beaumont’s creation of new habitats with underwater sculptures (Ocean Land, 1978) as one example.
55 Ibid. Ralmani created a decade-long immersion of the 1990s in Maine’s fishing culture in a collaborative effort to transform granite debris into a viable ecosystem. A contemporary example of engagement in Maine’s fishing industry is the work of artist, activist, environmental scientist Max Liboiron. As an Assistant Professor in Geography at Memorial University of Newfoundland, she directs the Civic Laboratory for Environmental Action Research (CLEAR), which, among other projects, develops apparatuses to test waters for microplastics with everyday materials. See: https://civiclaboratory.nl/.
In the case of Tempelhof, damage to its terrain is a tangle of the social, environmental, historical, and geopolitical. Ecological concerns and alternative market ideals meet through a contemporary thread of remediying such damage. Nikolai Roskamm has pointed to the tension between market forces and socio-cultural concerns. He describes the “provocation” of Tempelhof as:

a counter-thesis to the hegemonic market ideal of neoliberalism, an opposition to the usual definition of the city as place of trade and commerce, and finally an alternative model of centrality. Being central without being commercial and without having a clearly defined urban function—this is the challenge of the Tempelhofer Feld.57

Roskamm highlights how Tempelhof is considered by some as an economic burden to the city at large as central space that does not contribute to the market as other centers contribute with commercial enterprises that feed further cycles of gentrification. Roskamm instead sees Tempelhof’s openness to multiple temporary and recreational uses across a large and geographically central area as a prominent and positive challenge to neoliberal market ideals. Proposals to develop the park space consider Tempelhof as an unusual central space, while its challenge to the continuing cycles of local gentrification is embraced by the citizen referendums, the structure of garden systems, and artistic practices. Site-specific and temporary artworks on Tempelhof instead work with cyclical processes of ecologically sustainable use. Concern for these processes are central to the Plattenvereinigung’s inception as well as to the projects it hosts.

Kwon notes among many site-specific practices a “belief in, and a hope for the possibility

57 Roskamm, “4,000,000 m² of Public Space,” 68.
of a new efficacy for art outside the conventional institution and market conditions that normally define its limits, circumscribe its geographical and social reach, as well as determine its value and meaning.”58 Tsing similarly reads unruly edges of naturecultures to include both ecological and capitalist constructions by noticing and learning with “what manages to live despite capitalism.”59 Working with these tools calls for continuing a genealogy of art of the environment that embraces such geopolitical friction.

For example, the *Plattenvereinigung*, as a built form, respects ecological preservation of Tempelhof by only building on its surface, yet it functions to make visible a new combination of previously dispersed histories. The view from its second-story window does not offer a direct view of the adjacent grassland areas, but one of where asphalt and the urban city grid meet. This location for art of the environment offers a unique platform from which we might continue this engagement with cycles of historical, ecological, and artistic proportions to acknowledge cycles of mourning that accompany any revisiting of a lived site that has experienced repeated upheaval.

**A Desert in the City Center: Proposal for a Geopolitics of Art of the Environment**

So how does open become empty in the process of forming this genealogy? With respect to land art, Nisbet recognizes geopolitical dimensions of Walter De Maria’s work, arguing

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against interpretations in terms of an exclusive concern for remoteness. Nisbet maintains that although earlier works of De Maria’s treated the desert as an “empty compositional surface,” the artist increasingly recognized the desert as militarized. Philip Kaiser and Miwon Kwon similarly read reliance on an empty desert (as exemplary of other similarly remote locations) as instead complementary to urban life. Kelly Baum also finds evidence of this connection in Robert Smithson’s work. Baum notes how “nature, according to Smithson, was less the city’s opposite—static, transparent, unadulterated—than its dialectical complement, and the same set of abstract, immaterial relationships that underwrote cities also underwrote nature.” Kaiser and Kwon further argue how reading sites in the US West as empty risks erasure of traces of indigenous cultures and work of colonization, cultivation, militarization, as extensions of the urban grid that predate the emergence of land artworks.

Greater attention to the slippery label of desert as it appears in Smithson’s work and writings further exposes the tensions in the conception of Tempelhof as empty. Smithson linked physical alteration of sites to gallery-based displays of photographic documentation and containers of earth from the site. He considers these non-sites as containers that are each “a

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60 James Nisbet, “Surface/Sphere: Walter De Maria’s Geopolitical Dimensions,” *Art Bulletin* 98.3 (Sept. 2016): 374. Nisbet addresses a gap in scholarship of De Maria by rebuffing the sole employment of “quasi-mystical” interpretations of De Maria’s work that support “an aura of remoteness and exclusivity.”

61 Nisbet, “Surface/Sphere,” 376, 383, 385. One such example was De Maria’s *Olympic Mountain Project* proposal for the 1972 Olympic Games in Munich. This project proposed the excavation of a four-meter (13 ft 11/2 in) wide cylindrical column of earth from a sixty-meter-high mound formed by debris from air raids of WWII (a Schuttberg, or “rubble hill”), which would also extend sixty meters into the ground below. The project was eventually realized as *The Vertical Earth Kilometer* (1977) for the occasion of the sixth Documenta art fair in Kassel, Germany.


three-dimensional map” of layers of “cerebral” sediment that can be read as texts.\textsuperscript{65} One such desert of cerebral sediment is the last location visited in Smithson’s “A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey” (1967). Smithson visited several locations in Passaic’s industrial landscape and detailed his reactions, making a final stop at a local sandbox.\textsuperscript{66} For him, this sandbox becomes a “model desert” when rendered as a monument. He writes,

Under the dead light of the Passaic afternoon the desert became a map of infinite disintegration and forgetfulness. This monument of minute particles blazed under a bleakly glowing sun, and suggested the sullen dissolution of entire continents, the drying up of oceans—no longer were there green forests and high mountains—all that existed were millions of grains of sand, a vast deposit of bones and stones pulverized into dust.\textsuperscript{67}

Here, Smithson likens the grains of sandbox sand to desert sands and gives it an expansiveness beyond the boundaries of their sandbox container. The image of desert sands is linked with global desertification. He gives the expanding of the earth’s deserts an immediacy that propels reflection on a future moment when known forms have already dissolved into uniform grains of sand. This desert appears not as empty in the sense of pure, but as a site of ruin, or a space “deserted,” or no longer cared for. The “monuments” visited preceding the sandbox (industrial yards, bridges, rail lines, advertisements, construction site signage, and passing neighborhoods) become sites that reveal similar ruin through the metaphorical employment of both site and non-site: the sandbox and the desert.

Smithson’s reading of the sandbox follows his description of a roadside billboard—


\textsuperscript{67} Smithson, “Monuments of Passaic,” 74.
entitled “Your Highway Taxes at Work”—one which detailed the spending of collected taxes for the future of a specific construction site. Smithson named this collapse of future landscapes into billboard text a “zero panorama,” one that “seemed to contain ruins in reverse, that is—all the new construction that would eventually be built.” The billboard promises a new landscape that is not yet constructed. Smithson suggests this is, however, the opposite of the “romantic ruin” for “the buildings don’t fall into ruin after they are built but rather rise into ruin before they are built.” The promise of new construction places it into a landscape that will be set into ruin to accommodate new structures. Smithson seems to understand this zero panorama as an active area prematurely rendered a ruin in order to open the site to new development. This future construction also “rises into ruin” as its sets in motion a cycle of development that invites subsequent de- and reconstruction.

Although Smithson places this process as the opposite of the romantic ruin, the etymology of the word desert in the romantic era offers a salient linguistic moment when a desert could refer to any uninhabited or abandoned (i.e., deserted) wilderness, whether verdant or arid. Accounts of visitors to the Roman Forum offer such examples from a major urban center that Smithson also considers in relation to the monuments of Passaic. Smithson muses whether, with

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68 Ibid., 72.
69 Professor David O’Brien, “English Romantics” (Lecture, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, Spring 2016); The Online Etymological Dictionary, “Desert,” http://etymonline.com/index.php?allowed_in_frame=0&search=desert. The noun “desert” enters Old French (12th century) as related to “wilderness, wasteland; destruction, ruin,” from the Latin desertum, the “thing abandoned” (which is also used in a Latin version of the Roman Catholic Church to translate “wilderness”), and noun use of the neuter past participle of Latin deserere “forsake.” This is also the source of the Italian diserto, Old Provençal dezert, and Spanish desierto. “Desert” as “wasteland,” began in the early thirteenth century (from Old French) and the the implication of a “waterless, treeless region” gradually became the main meaning through Middle English.
its proliferation of monumental ruins, “Passaic replaced Rome as The Eternal City?” The deserts and “wide plains” of the surrounding forests and campagne of Rome became the trace of the frequent demolitions, excavations, and additions to the Forum, especially in evidence in the abundant clearing of perimeters around its monuments during the Napoleonic occupation. This slippage in terms allows the Forum to collapse into a zero panorama, enabling continuing cycles of development akin to those Smithson reads from the Passaic billboard text. Yet spontaneous green growth in the cracks and fissures of the Forum’s changing façades resist this collapse, marking time between demolitions and growing in resistance to human control. This central desert is not empty, but an active ecosystem in its own right.

We might recognize a similar form of resistance in the daily activities of visitors and artists on Tempelhof and consider how art of the environment engages soil when discourse

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70 Smithson, “Monuments of Passaic,” 74.
71 Chloe Chard, Tristes Plaisirs: A Critical Reader of the Romantic Grand Tour (New York: Manchester University Press, 2014). Chard allows us to enter the world of travelers to Italy on the Grand Tour through their writings; Lady Sydney Morgan, Italy, vol. 2 (London: Henry Colburn, 1821), 335–9, in ibid. One such traveler, Lady Morgan, describes Rome and its surrounding campagne as “Rome, and its surrounding deserts.” Charlotte Eaton, Rome in the Nineteenth Century, vol. 3, 419–24, in Chard, Tristes Plaisirs, 72. At the time of Eaton’s observations, monuments selected for preservation were given a ten-meter radius of separation from public use. Eaton, for example, notes the Coliseum’s separation from the city grid, with newly cleared surrounding space to allow one to “admire” the monument, while also noting how easily the area of the Forum could become an “antique theme park”; Ronald T. Ridley, The Eagle and the Spade: Archaeology in Rome During the Napoleonic Era (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 33, 51. The radius described by Eaton was legally designated a “zone of protection”; Susan Vander Nicassio, Imperial City: Rome Under Napoleon (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 33.
72 Chard, “The Road to Ruin: Memory, Ghosts, Moonlight, and Weeds” in Roman Presences: Receptions of Rome in European Culture, 1789–1945, ed. Catharine Edwards (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 138; Nicassio, Imperial City, 58. Charlotte Eaton also notes an abundance of plant life still present in the Forum at 1817: “So great it the variety of plants that have rooted themselves in the ancient walls of the Coliseum along that Sebastiani, the professor of Botany at Rome, published a work in quarto entitled Flora Colisea, in which he describes 260 different kinds that are found there. But I am informed this does not merely include the whole, which, with the various sorts of mosses and lichens, amount to upwards of 300 species.”
surrounding the uncertain future of Tempelhof obscures its existing active ecosystems, both contemporary and historical. In the case of Tempelhof, soil that was massively displaced by early agricultural endeavors, May Day events, forced labor, and two world wars, now rests under environmental protection (Figure 22). The park’s protected areas and active edges are, in Smithson’s terms, projected into ruin to allow new development, which is simultaneously opposed and supported. Smithson’s concept of the zero panorama first attributes to construction cycles a sense of timelessness, which is also a quality he then reads into the grains of sand in the Passaic sandbox.\textsuperscript{74} He concludes his observations, however, by describing the live use of the sandbox, which “somehow doubled as an open grave—a grave that children cheerfully play in.”\textsuperscript{75} The description of a grave opened to play, however macabre, resonates with the current state of Tempelhof. Artwork on Tempelhof can hold open a gap, a space to play with, that allows emptiness to exist, but as continually coupled with its questioning. In the same way that Smithson creates a monument by reading cerebral sediment of the grains of a sandbox, we might read the soil of Tempelhof as both cerebral and monumental.\textsuperscript{76} In this way, Tempelhof’s horizon becomes a zero panorama that challenges our readings of the changing activities that occur there, revealing an active geopolitical desert on which to read public art of the present.

\textsuperscript{74} Smithson, “Monuments of Passaic,” 74.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid.
PART III | RENEGOTIATING SHARP EDGES OF THE HORIZON

The preceding genealogy of art of the environment enables us to understand contemporary site-specific artworks on Tempelhof both as working in a *Machinelandschaft* and pastoral space, with many unruly edges of coexisting narratives stemming from diverse naturecultures. Each moment of friction includes a multitude of cycles remembering and forgetting, or of what Donna Haraway has called “cycles of living and dying.” This work includes the ghosts of these worlds as well as their fictions and stories.\(^77\) Again, this consideration seems especially relevant in the German context, in which active attention to the stakes of remembering and forgetting remain of great concern. Now that we see a park open to multifarious activities read with contemporary public art, how can we further read these cyclical junctures together?

In *Staying with the Trouble*, Haraway reads across diverse life cycles for comparative survival methods of other species that might offer a collective way forward in our rapidly changing and increasingly unstable global environment.\(^78\) She includes temporary artistic practices in this endeavor of tracing lines of living and dying.\(^79\) This learning process exceeds divisions between humans, animals, and the environment. Any one mode of tracing will not suffice, since highlighting certain cycles can only occur at the costs of others. When *Staying with the Trouble*, it matters to humans, animals, and nature how we trace these connections.\(^80\) As we

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\(^{77}\) Subramaniam, Preface to *Ghost Stories from Darwin*, x. Subramaniam names these as processes of ally-making to enact a feminist “reconstructive science” with Haraway’s tool of naturecultures.


\(^{79}\) Ibid., 4.

\(^{80}\) Ibid., 55.
have seen with the histories of Tempelhof, highlighting certain histories can invite erasure of others. Rather than rendering Tempelhof as emptied of history or neutralized by openness to pioneering, we might instead, as Haraway urges, engage in unexpected collaborations and combinations. In this case, the opening of Tempelhof enables potential for similarly vibrant activity. By repatterning experience and activity, we can practice paying attention to clusters of life cycles in this space without only reading them as either cycles of despair or of hope.\footnote{Ibid., 33. Haraway introduces this proposal as a method. I am arguing the relevance of this work to the site of Tempelhof.}

Engagement and alignment with cycles of ecological ruin and subsequent new growth could repattern rhetoric isolated in narratives of freedom or complete lack thereof (*Tempelhof Freiheit* or *Kein Ort der Freiheit*). We might then learn with the stressed layers of cycles of life and death on Tempelhof that, as Haraway insists, appear heightened in a neoliberal system, one that Roskamm proposes as a challenge to existence of the current *Tempelhof Freiheit.*\footnote{Haraway, “Tentacular Thinking,” 33; Roskamm, “4,000,000 m² of Public Space,” 68; Baum, “Nobody’s Property,” 33n12. Kelly Baum makes explicit Smithson’s attention to “stressed” sites as those under pressure from both nature and humans. I consider the the *Tempelhof Freiheit* as such a site.} Expanding consideration of Tempelhof’s unruly edges in this way further supports the use of Tempelhof as a multivalent object to be questioned by artistic action within an ecological continuum.

Attention to interspecies cycles requires a specificity that the linguistic displacement of wilderness and deserts traced in Part II of this thesis attempts to undermine. Tempelhof’s park dimensions instead offer an open yet active boundary. The preservation of large areas of grassland and the temporary nature of activities in the park recognizes the value of the life cycles of human and nonhuman users of its space. Open access to the park also allows access to stories
of its cerebral sediment and histories of its former lives and daily uses. This same space, however, when rhetorically employed to support reading the expansiveness of the field as emptiness, also empties the soil of its monumentality and erases its previous displacements.\textsuperscript{83} Cerebral sediment, such as the archaeological remains made visible by Pollock and Bernbeck’s excavations, emerges in defiance of this erasure, appearing at naturecultural boundaries to give new visibility to objects whose stories contribute a sense of monumentality to Tempelhof’s soil.\textsuperscript{84} Their excavations were enabled by the dismantling of future architectural construction before it was enacted, in a manner akin to reading Smithson’s zero panorama of ruins in reverse and Tsing’s scholarship engaged in “ruin and possibility.”\textsuperscript{85}

Returning to the \textit{Plattenvereinigung} project space introduced earlier, the building itself is notable in the way that it makes possible learning with cycles of ruin and possibility.\textsuperscript{86} The

\textsuperscript{83} I mean monumentality in the sense Robert Smithson employs in “A Tour of the Monuments of Passaic, New Jersey” (1967, discussed on page twenty-seven of this paper). Smithson’s cerebral sediment allows us to consider emergent growth and activity on Tempelhof as monumental and maintains the important role of ecological cycles in this process.

\textsuperscript{84} In conversation with Dr. Susan Pollock, January 10, 2017. Archaeological remains from Tempelhof’s early history of interment from the 2012–14 excavations also appear in the work of artist Ella Littwitz as three-dimensionally printed replicas, which were exhibited at the Museum of Israel. This series \textit{Where there is / What is there?} (2012–14) includes an enlarged scan of the only photographic negatives found in the excavations, archival imagery, and a 3-D printed replica of a toothbrush, a broken cup, a lock and key, part of a license plate. Littwitz’s series also includes the video \textit{Whistle} (2013, 8 min 19 sec), in which she plays a vinyl record modelled on the broken piece to play fragments of US post-WWII military broadcasts. Press Release, “Fragmented Time,” Catinca Tabacaru Gallery (June 29-August 7, 2016), https://www.artforum.com/uploads/guide.003/id25892/press_release.pdf. The group show with Rachel Monosov, Benjamin Verhoeven, Reijiro Wada, was curated by Rachel Monosov; Website of Ella Littwitz, http://ellalittwitz.com/what-there-is-what-is-there.html; Ghila Limon and Tal Bechler, “Ella Littwitz,” http://www.herzliyamuseum.co.il/english/september-2014/re-view/ella-littwitz; Sabine Zentek, \textit{Designer im Dritten Reich: Gute Formen sind eine Frage der richtigen Haltung} (Dortmund: Lelesken-Verlag, 2009) in Starzmann, “Excavating Tempelhof Airfield,” 214. The broken cup was provided by The Deutsche Arbeitsfront (DAF, German Labour Front, the replacement “union” after the banning of all unions by the NSDAP, National Socialist German Worker’s Party. Each sample of tableware was marked with the following inscription: “Amt Schönheit der Arbeit” (Beauty of Labour Bureau); Starzmann, “Excavating Tempelhof,” 226n4. Excavations also revealed outlines of graves, likely from when the area was a military cemetery in 1870.

\textsuperscript{85} Tsing, \textit{Friction}, 270.

\textsuperscript{86} The working theme of the \textit{Plattenvereinigung} from May to October of 2016 makes this evident; it was \textit{Serialität}
process of cyclical construction that explicitly leaves open the possibility for future reconstructions, as well as its placement on Tempelhof, offers a unique platform for questioning the relationship of its site to its functions. The view from the building’s windows frames the daily activities on Tempelhof’s fields and asphalt and brings them into close focus. From the second story windows, the monumental terminal building at the opposite corner of the field is part of a horizon line that also includes the peaks of buildings on the site of a former Gestapo prison, trees, apartment buildings, local mosque minarets, and the Berlin TV tower (*Fernsehturm*) of the former East alike.\(^87\)

The Nordic artists collective *Luftkollektivet*’s one-week residency in this project space in 2014 offers a salient counter-proposal to the land use exhibited in the May Day newsreel and one answer to how we can profit from both the openness of Tempelhof and the friction of its histories by repatterning its land use.\(^88\) *Luftkollektivet* member Regine Osbakk describes the group as working “with what exists in the air between” participants—negotiations achieved through verbal discussion and material practice.\(^89\) Their title well reflects this method; *Luftkollektivet* translates as “air-collective,” in both the Norwegian and the German.\(^90\) The Luftkollektivet’s

\(^{87}\) Figure 8 provides a limited illustration of these details.

\(^{88}\) Haraway, “Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene,” in *Staying with the Trouble*, 33. I again use “repatterning” in keeping with Haraway’s proposed method of repatternning our experiences and activities to practice paying attention to clusters of life cycles (i.e. in this case, in the space of Tempelhof) without only reading them as either cycles of despair or of hope.

\(^{89}\) In conversation with Regine Osbakk, August 2016.

\(^{90}\) Participants (now based in Norway, Sweden, and Germany) in the Luftkollektivet at Tempelhof included: Jessica Blom (SE), Line Anda Dalmar (NO), Sarah Jost (SE), Regine Osbakk (NO), Karen Pettersen (NO), David A. Rios (NO) and Siri Sandersen (NO). On Tempelhof, the Luftkollektivet worked from April 12–16, 2014, and maintained daily opening hours from 9:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m. and 2:30 p.m.–5:30 p.m. The finissage took place on April 16th at
collective practice involves rotating projects on a daily basis.\textsuperscript{91} They each initiate a line of inquiry on the first day of their weeklong residency and then continue another’s work on each subsequent day, culminating in a collection of works that are always in progress and collectively authored, thereby existing outside of and refusing inclusion in the art market.\textsuperscript{92} This resistance seems exemplary of Roskamm’s reading of Tempelhof as a challenge to neoliberalism.\textsuperscript{93} The Luftkollektivet instead trade in a marketplace of actions and discussions. These can be traced by the movement of material that makes a temporary nest of each residency site visited in their practice.

The second-floor room of the \textit{Plattenvereinigung}, their workspace on Tempelhof, was open for visitation and discussion with visitors welcomed during the residency week (Figure 26). Narrating a chain of linked gestures within the work-in-progress beginning with an initial gesture by Osbakk demonstrates how the collective used their time to knit experience of the \textit{Plattenvereinigung}’s structure and surroundings together. Osbakk began her questioning of the site by marking the main attraction of Tempelhof, its horizon line, as viewed from the second floor of the building with a one-foot-high smear of Vaseline across an approximately fifteen-foot-wide windowpane, divided into five panels (Figure 27). The use of Vaseline on glass recalls a technique of marking camera lenses to achieve blurred or soft-focus effects, or to remove the

\begin{footnotesize}
5:00 p.m., with a sound performance by Joni Hyvönen (SE). Collaborators in previous iterations include: (At Porsgrunn) Jessica Blom, Line Anda Dalmar, Malin Jansson, Sarah Jost, Regine Osbakk, Karen Pettersen, Siri Sandersen, finissage reading by Sigurd Tenningen and concert by DJ Kristin Evensen; (At Kristiansand) joined by Nina Björkendahl. \textsuperscript{91} As established in the two previous meetings of the Luftkollektivet in Norway (Kristiansand in 2011, and Porsgrunn in 2012). \textsuperscript{92} In conversation with Regine Osbakk, August 2016. \textsuperscript{93} Roskamm, “4,000,000 m\textsuperscript{2} of Public Space,” 68.
\end{footnotesize}
This mark is not made directly on the field, but looks outward from within a built space and instead makes visible the glass that filters this view, further emphasizing the way that the building’s windows frames the surrounding landscape. Osbakk’s work presents this mediated view as a question that was then translated and echoed on subsequent days by other artists in the group who traced lines on the wall and on sheets of paper tiled in a line above the Vaseline smear. These were then suspended perpendicular to the window’s surface from two lines of string, as parallel planes, making visible the line of sight (Figures 27–28). These gestures mark extended time spent examining the mediated view of Tempelhof’s edge areas as viewed from the Plattenvereinigung. This is perhaps made most explicit with the addition of a piece of paper twisted into a Möbius strip-like set of binoculars and adhered to the window pane (Figure 28b). Attention to the lens of viewing the site from this particular building reactivates the histories of its built structure for further questioning in relation to the park space and its histories.

Further cycles of work utilize material from the environment of Tempelhof itself. Twigs were collected and secured into bundles of various sizes. Bags of water and plant samples included specimens from previous residencies and were joined by new samples from Tempelhof, and laid across a wooden table (Figures 29–31). Other bags were filled with air from Tempelhof and hung from the edges of the table, as well as gathered into a bundle, and suspended from the ceiling. Some of the bags were also inflated by breath, imaging a symbolic cyclical exchange of

air among all visitors to the field space as distilled into the exhalations of one human body. This is the physical Luft (air) of the Luftkollektivet, exchanged through discussion and temporarily outlined in the malleable synthetic container of a balloon. Their sampling of twigs, water, and plants from Tempelhof for use as materials in the project space, both in physical form and in video or by representation in text or drawing also further recalls Smithson’s site and non-site constructions, albeit of a more temporary nature. The samples are interestingly of pieces of nature and not of, say, crumbling asphalt, that also forms part of the material world of the Machinelandschaft of Tempelhof. But like the methods of the Luftkollektivet, who worked in a continual state of being in process, their gestures measure and question their temporary position in new surroundings without claiming control of its resources. Instead, each temporary gesture honors time spent examining the site and opening it to questioning. Artwork in the Plattenvereinigung seems refracted through multiple non-sites.

We can read the particular cycle of the Luftkollektivet’s work in terms of frictions of naturecultures in order to reconsider histories of the field as part of an ecological continuum, yet one also mindful of its cycles of damage. Value lies in the opportunity to create meaningful exchanges among group members, visitors, and the site. This seems to be the antithesis to the full-scale utilization of the field as evidenced in the May Day newsreel and more like the archaeological work of Pollock and Bernbeck, which works to honor gestures of daily lives that have been forgotten. The Luftkollektivet offers a platform for examining the alignment of work

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95 Donna Haraway, Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016). I mean “thinking-with” in the sense frequently employed by Haraway, to signal an attempt to learn through linked situated practices; Tsing, Friction.
completed in daily cycles in a way that was never permitted before the opening of Tempelhof as a park. Artworks can operate within the boundaries of accepted use of Tempelhof and yet enact that which has never been done at this location. Artworks, like blind spots, that appear and disappear, can offer companions with which to engage history as more specific, more porous and open to questioning.

Architect and historian Keller Easterling notes the role of architects not only in the construction of buildings, but in their subtraction; one tool of subtraction is demolition. Smithson makes use of like thinking when considering the cyclical collapse of construction processes into representation by a zero panorama. The *Plattenvereinigung* makes use of subtraction as a tool in a decidedly cyclical process—the sampling of two prefabricated buildings, their rejoining, and the possibility to do so again. The opening of the *Luftkollektivet*’s work-in-progress at the end of their residency week marks, instead of the conclusion of a finished body of work now open for sale, the continuation of cycles of discussion and further practices, akin to Haraway’s proposal of repatterning our views of cyclical processes. Just as, according to Haraway, neither narratives of despair or hope will yield the greatest potential for collaborative learning, neither construction or subtraction alone will offer entire solutions to addressing tensions in built spaces. With the work of the *Luftkollektivet* and other site-specific artwork we can read the fissure between open and empty on Tempelhof as vibrant.

96 In conversation with Regine Osbakk, August 2016.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


APPENDIX A: ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure 1: View from the former northern runway of Tempelhof, looking eastward toward the district of Neukölln. | L. Leopold, August 2016.

Figure 2: Aerial view from the west. | D. Laubner, thf.berlin.de.
Figure 3: View south from the northern runway. | L. Leopold, August 2016.

Figure 4: View from eastern entrance. | L. Leopold, January, 2017.
Figure 5: Plan of the Tempelhofer Feld by Grün Berlin GmbH designating park entrances, seasonal opening hours, and recorded uses. The Plattenvereinigung project space (see Fig. 7) is located adjacent to the icon marking skateboarding, near the southeastern corner of the field. This project space is labeled neither here nor in the interactive map on the website of Grün Berlin. | Open download, “Plan Tempelhofer Feld,” https://gruen-berlin.de/tempelhofer-feld.
Figure 6: Postcard, ca. 1936, Courtesy of the Historical Archive of the German Museum of Technology in Berlin, VI.1.040-5281. This image presents an aerial view looking southeast over the Tempelhofer Feld and the new Airport Terminal Building, which frames the lower left-hand corner. The edges of the airport field appear knit into the surrounding urban fabric, while the runways and their encircled green areas appear strikingly newly rendered.
Figure 7 (above): *The World is Not Fair (Die Große Weltaustellung)*, 2012. Temporary pavilions for performance and discussion, organized by architecture firm Raumlaborberlin and Berlin theater company HAU. | inhabitat.de.

Figure 8 (below): The *Plattenvereinigung* project space, viewed from the south. A view of the former Tempelhof airport terminal is visible along the horizon to the left of the building, and directly to the right of the outer staircase support, the top of the *Fernsehturm* TV tower at Alexanderplatz. | L. Leopold, January 2017.
Figure 9: Preparation of the Telefunk loudspeaker head (01:38:19:02). Telefunk is a German radio company founded in 1918. | Jpegs of digitized newsreel used with permission of the Archive of the German Museum of Technology in Berlin (Deutsches Technisches Museum Berlin) I.2.060F.020A (For Figs. 9–28).

Figure 10: Packaging loudspeakers in preparation for transport to Tempelhof (01:39:28:07).

Figure 11: Delivery of loudspeaker units to Tempelhof: removal of one unit onto the field (01:41:27:07).
Figure 12: Opening image of the newsreel (1:34:50:29).

Figure 13: The third control station built for Telefunk loudspeaker operations. See Figure 15 for placement of huts I and II (01:37:21:06).
Figure 14: View toward what is likely the present day Paradestraße Subway stop (marked with a “U”) (01:35:22:09).

Figure 15: Plan for the installation of loud speakers, controls, and stands on occasion of May Day celebrations under National Socialism in 1934 (01:35:28:07).
Figure 16: (01:36:08:24).

Figure 17: (01:36:14:24).
Figure 18: (01:36:39:17).

Figure 19 (below, left): Block signage on the northernmost runway near the Columbiadamm entrance, and Figure 20 (below, right): Information kiosk near the Oderstraße entrance.
Figure 21: Two double-sided information boards adjacent to the northern runway. The sides shown are in English, and include archival images of “The First Airport.” The reverse sides are in German, “Der erste Flughafen.” Only one signpost is devoted to histories of forced labor and internment. | L. Leopold, August 2016.

Figure 22: Growth through the asphalt adjacent to the northern runway, near the Columbiadamm entrance. | L. Leopold, August 2016.
Figure 23: View of the Plattenvereinigung. The top floor is accessed by an external staircase. (See Figs. 25–26.) | L. Leopold, January 2017.

Figure 24: View of the Plattenvereinigung as approached from the east.
Figure 27: Luftkollektivet, work-in-progress, 2014. View through Vaseline on window surface of the Plattenvereinigung, see below. | Image courtesy of the Luftkollektivet, 2014.
Figure 30 (above) and Figure 31 (below): Luftkollektivet, work-in-progress, Tempelhof (2014). The two left-most bags below are labeled: (above) with water and a clip of pine tree, “Kristiansand, Norway, 2014”; (below) filled with air, “Kristiansand, Norway, 9.4.2014.” The central container is labeled “Berlin 2014.” | Jpeg images courtesy of the Luftkollektivet.