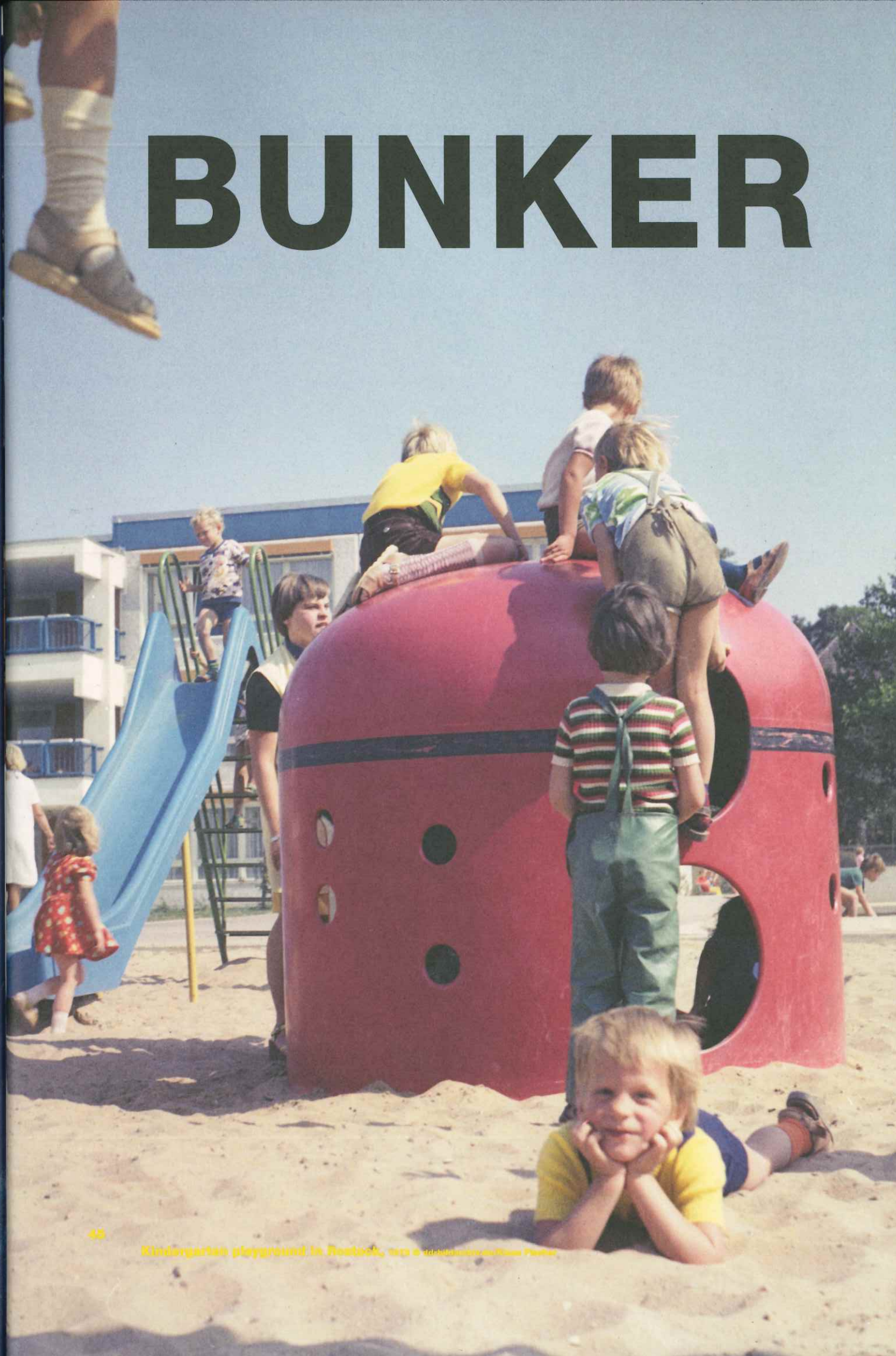
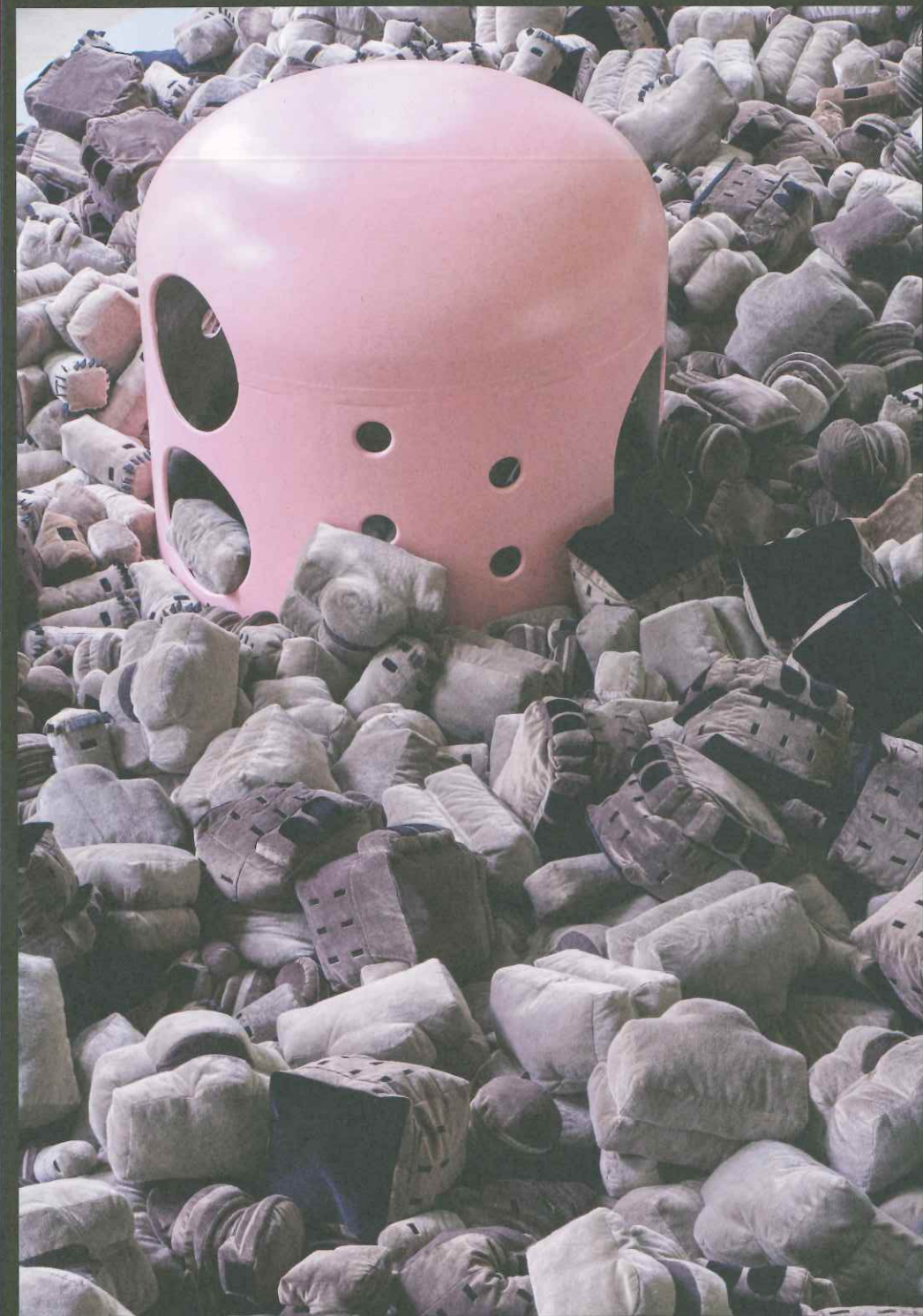




BUNKER





A. Mühe - installation view ©Gunter Lepkowski

From 1958 to 1965, the French cultural philosopher and essayist Paul Virilio explored the coastal bunkers of the Atlantic Wall built by the Nazis. Designed to protect German dominated Europe from attack between 1940 and 1945, the imposing ruins of the Atlantikwall conceal within their decaying walls a complex weave of historical narratives relating to Nazi Germany's supposedly »heroic« struggle for global supremacy. A selection of the numerous photographs he took of the partially destroyed fortresses or those that had sunk into the sand were published in 1975 together with an essay in his book *Bunker Archéologie* and exhibited in the Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris in 1975/76. Inspired by Virilio's observations, architects and, above all, visual artists subsequently dealt with the phenomenon of bunker architecture - its aesthetics, urban location or psychological effect. A futuristic worldview

manifests itself in the bunkers described and documented by Paul Virilio as evidence of the inhumane Second World War. 80 years ago - on June 6, 1944 - D-Day resulted in mass deaths of the Western Allies on the Atlantic coast, while the vastly outnumbered Wehrmacht was holed up in the bunkers. Since these days, warfare in the twentieth century has increasingly moved away from battles in "real space" towards a decisive advantage in combat for those who are able to locate their opponents in "virtual space" first. Increasingly lethal weapon systems have also made the bunker obsolete as a place of protection. For Virilio, this development in war technology is a metaphor for trends in society and the changing perception of people, in which essential elements of location are out-sourced from the physical.



Bunkerbeschussplatte I, © VG-Bildkunst, Bonn 2024

ANDREAS MÜHE SOFT CRUSH

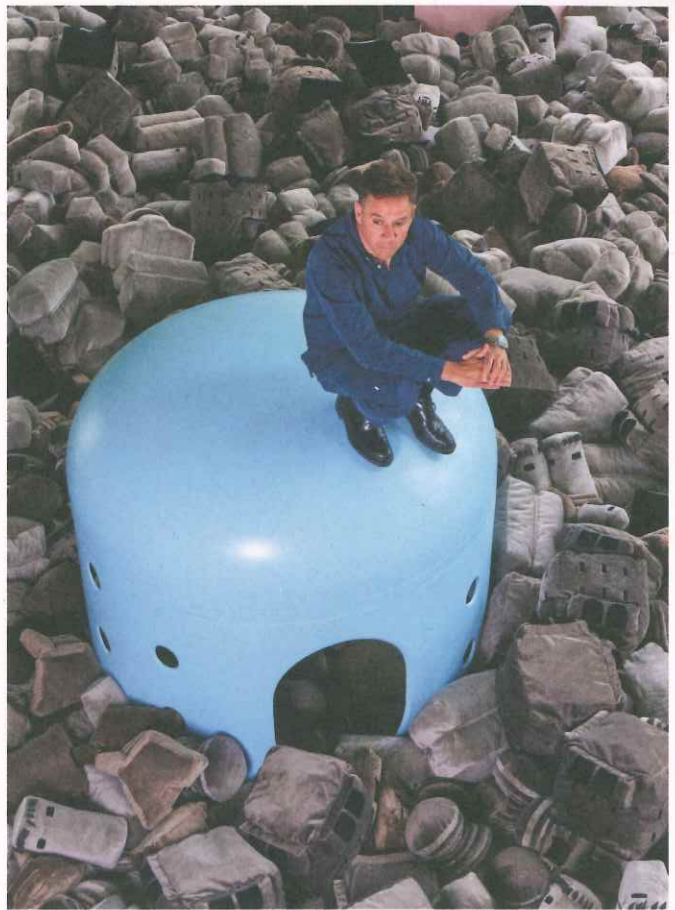
Andreas Mühe might be one of the best-known German photographers of this time. With his intensive and unyielding examination of the recent German past, he has repeatedly addressed and illustrated controversial topics. He composes finely arranged narratives by means of analog, strictly thought-out photographs in large format. He himself, born in 1979 in Karl-Marx-Stadt, now Chemnitz, experienced the fall of the Wall as a child in East Berlin. He grew up in the newly reunified capital in the freedom - and indeterminacy - of the 1990s. His own family history, like that of so many at the time is characterized by the processing of grandparental guilt, branches of the family torn apart by the Wall, and hope and disappointment about a new state. Mühe deals with the German soul and the public and political handling of it like an emblem for historiography and remembrance. He reflects their constructedness and the danger of subjective influence in his artistic work. Carefully arranged stage sets do not shy away from revealing their artificiality. Mühe emphasizes the artistic setting in order to avoid the "this-is-what-it-was" of photography.

Bunkers pervade Europe's landscape as monumental forms of concrete, from Germany to Brittany in France and the English Channel, but especially along the coast of the Atlantic from Norway to the Spanish border. In Italy, Austria, Germany and many other countries, bunkers are still found in city centres today as oversized, indestructible structures. The Nazis called their bunker construction project "Fortress Europe", a fort of dictatorship that is permanently inscribed into the bunkers.

As someone who likes to go surfing abroad, Mühe often encountered these relics of Germanworld domination dreams, these shameful German greetings made of concrete. But of course one also finds plenty of them Berlin too. One of the high-rise bunkers there was to accommodate rail travelers, it had to be built by forced laborers. Later, the GDR used it to store tropical fruit from Cuba, which is why it was known as the "Bananenbunker" for a long time. It now houses the private art collection of Christian Boros with a penthouse on top. In Mühe's bunker bath there is a plush version of it.

However, the exhibition is not limited to concrete bunkers, as there were also smaller "splinter protection cells", and the small metal caves on GDR playgrounds later resembled them, metal caves on GDR playgrounds. These were officially intended for children's amusement, but - as one of the wall texts says had a "paramilitary trait", there was an unpleasant tendency towards drill in education and drill. For his show, Mühe had replicas of this play equipment but in children's room colors, however, which make them look surprisingly contemporary. In his first sculptural work. Mühe intensifies the transformation of the bunker to the greatest possible extent: he reduces the monumental dimensions of the hard concrete architectures to a humanly comprehensible size and transforms them into small, soft objects that children play with. In place of a singular monument, Mühe allows many small "fabric bunkers" to arise, a sea of bunkers, as it were, which floods the exhibition space.

Mühe has consciously decided in favour of a democratic, an approachable, large quantity instead of a single monolith dominating everything. Through this contradiction, the artist invites us to question and examine bunkers - their architecture, impact and history: what function do bunkers have today in the city, but also along the Atlantic coast? What becomes of the buildings when they are used as party locations, band rehearsal spaces or as loft for the cultivation of mushrooms? In the face of the present-day technology of war and weaponry, can there even be such a thing as a constructed protective space? Well, there are still Bunkers build for the filthy riches anxiety and self induced doomsday dystopias... sad but true...



A. Mühe ©Gunter Lepkowski

THE WHOLE GERMAN HARSHNESS IS SUDDENLY THEMATIZED BY A SOFT ART OBJECT, A CUDDLY TOY ... AN ARMY OF CUDDLY TOYS



Andreas Mühe, Bunker - Mood 06, © VG-Bildkunst, Bonn 2024