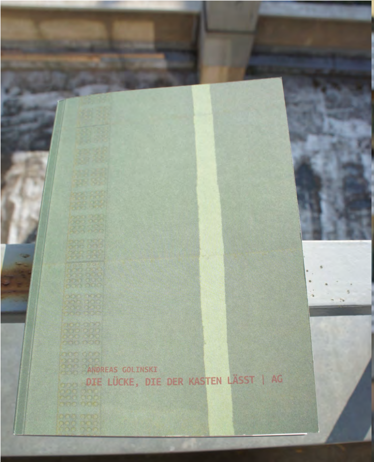

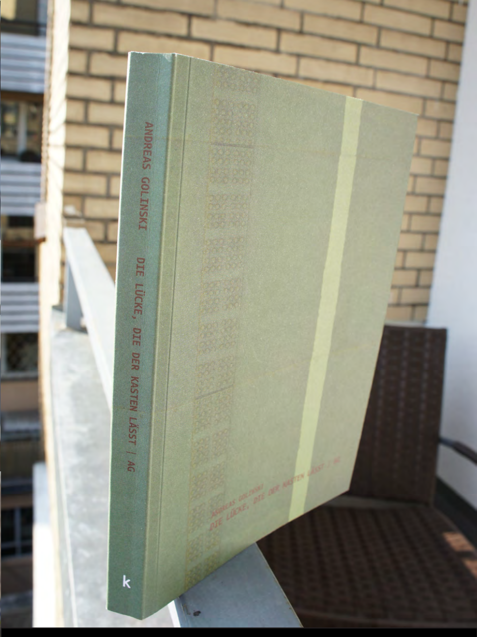

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ANDREAS GOLINSKI
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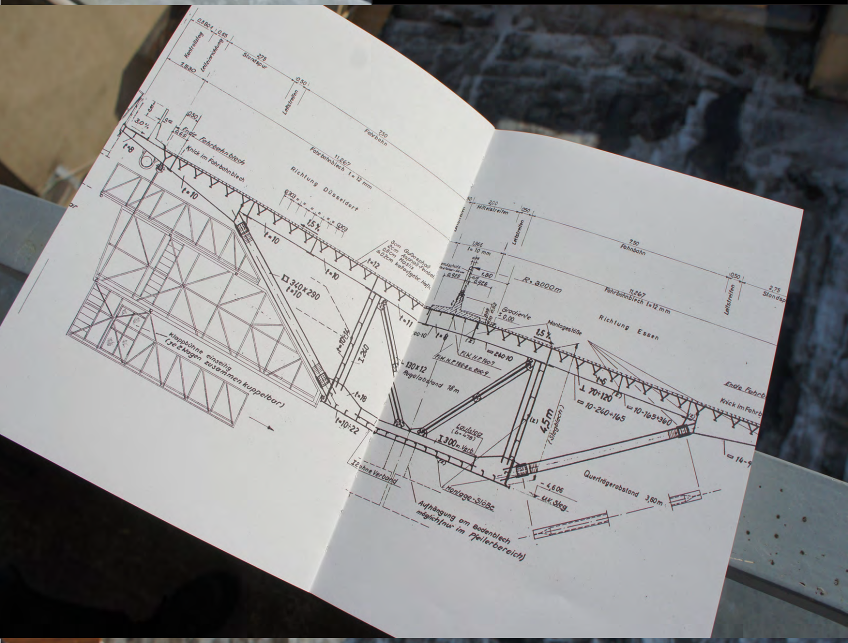

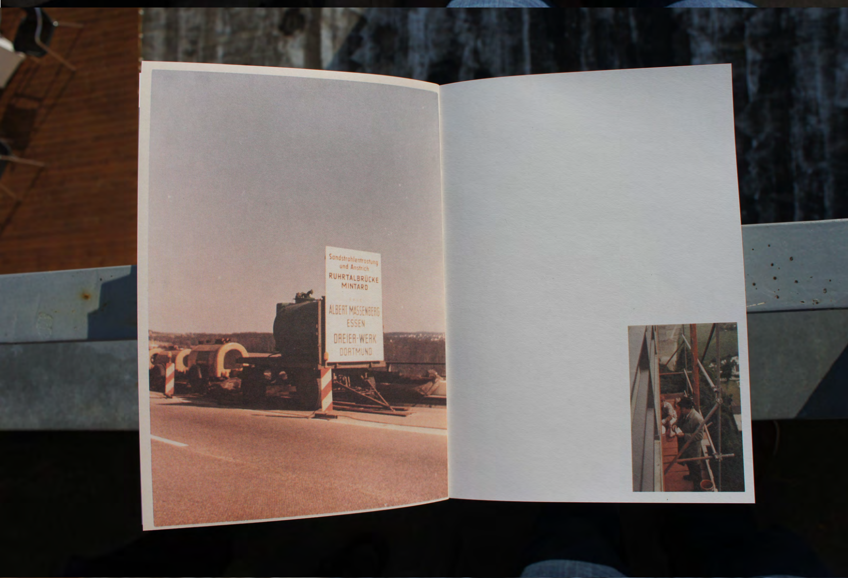

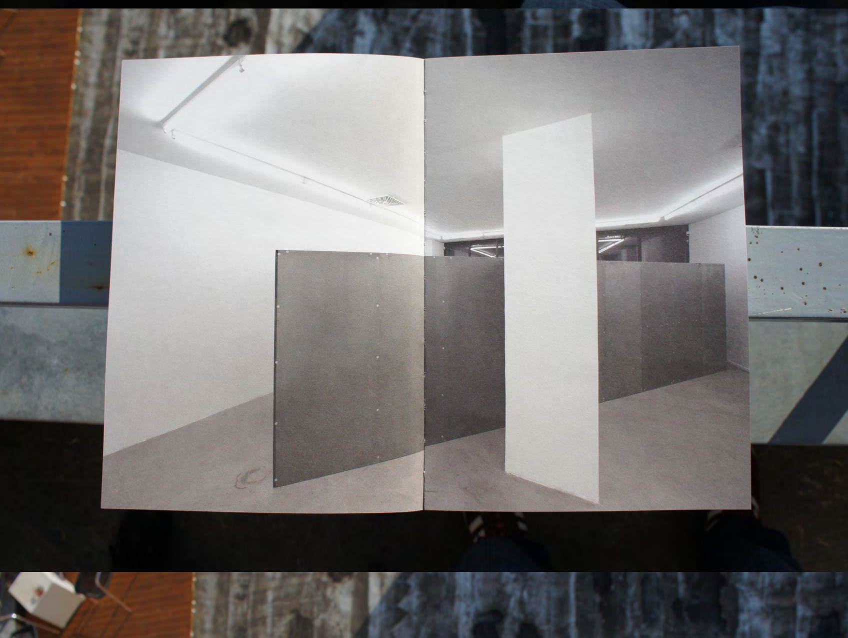

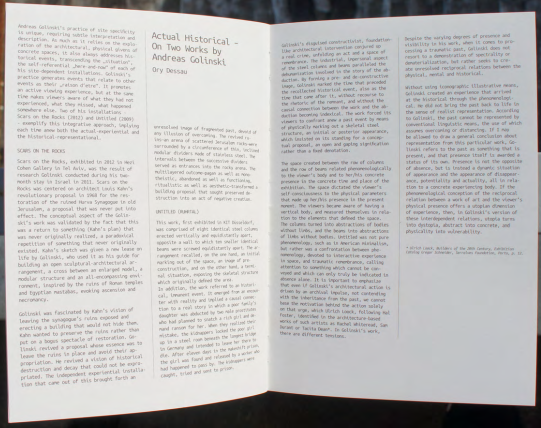

Andreas Golinski's practice of site specificity is unique, requiring subtle interpretation and description. As much as it relies on the exploration of the architectural, physical givens of concrete spaces, it also always addresses historical events, transcending the „situation", the self-referential „here-and-now" of each of his site-dependent installations. Golinski's practice generates events that relate to other events as their „raison d'etre". It promotes an active viewing experience, but at the same time makes viewers aware of what they had not experienced, what they missed, what happened somewhere else. Two of his installations - Scars on the Rocks (2012) and Untitled (2009) - exemplify this integrative approach, implying each time anew both the actual-experiential and the historical-representational.

Actual Historical – On Two Works by Andreas Golinski

Ory Dessau

SCARS ON THE ROCKS

Scars on the Rocks, exhibited in 2012 in Hezi Cohen Gallery in Tel Aviv, was the result of research Golinski conducted during his two-month stay in Israel in 2011. Scars on the Rocks was centered on architect Louis Kahn's revolutionary proposal in 1968 for the restoration of the ruined Hurva Synagogue in old Jerusalem, a proposal that was never put into effect. The conceptual aspect of the Golinski's work was validated by the fact that this was a return to something (Kahn's plan) that was never originally realized, a paradoxical repetition of something that never originally existed. Kahn's sketch was given a new lease on life by Golinski, who used it as his guide for building an open sculptural-architectural arrangement, a cross between an enlarged model, a modular structure and an all-encompassing environment, inspired by the ruins of Roman temples and Egyptian mastabas, evoking ascension and necromancy.

Golinski was fascinated by Kahn's vision of leaving the synagogue's ruins exposed and erecting a building that would not hide them. Kahn wanted to preserve the ruins rather than put on a bogus spectacle of restoration. Golinski revived a proposal whose essence was to leave the ruins in place and avoid their appropriation. He revived a vision of historical destruction and decay that could not be expropriated. The independent experiential installation that came out of this brought forth an unresolved image of fragmented past, devoid of any illusion of overcoming. The revived ruins—an arena of scattered Jerusalem rocks—were surrounded by a circumference of thin, inclined modular dividers made of stainless steel. The intervals between the successive dividers served as entrances into the rocky arena. The multilayered outcome—pagan as well as monotheistic, abandoned as well as functioning, ritualistic as well as aesthetic—transformed a building proposal that sought preserved destruction into an act of negative creation.

UNTITLED (RUHRTAL)

This work, first exhibited in KIT Düsseldorf, was comprised of eight identical steel columns erected vertically and equidistantly apart, opposite a wall to which ten smaller identical beams were screwed equidistantly apart. The arrangement recalled, on the one hand, an initial marking out of the space, an image of pre-construction, and on the other hand, a terminal situation, exposing the skeletal structure which originally defined the area.
In addition, the work referred to an historical, immanent event. It emerged from an encounter with reality and implied a causal connection to a real story in which a poor family's daughter was abducted by two male prostitutes who had planned to snatch a rich girl and demand ransom for her. When they realized their mistake, the kidnappers locked the poor girl up in a steel room beneath the longest bridge in Germany and intended to leave her there to die. After eleven days in the makeshift prison, the girl was found and released by a worker who had happened to pass by. The kidnappers were caught, tried and sent to prison.

Golinski's disguised constructivist, foundation-like architectural intervention conjured up a real crime, unfolding an act and a space of remembrance. The industrial, impersonal aspect of the steel columns and beams paralleled the dehumanization involved in the story of the abduction. By forming a pre- and de-constructive image, Golinski marked the time that preceded the recollected historical event, also as the time that came after it, without recourse to the rhetoric of the remnant, and without the causal connection between the work and the abduction becoming indexical. The work forced its viewers to confront anew a past event by means of physically marking out a skeletal steel structure, an initial or posterior appearance, which insisted on its standing for a conceptual proposal, an open and gaping signification rather than a fixed denotation.

The space created between the row of columns and the row of beams related phenomenologically to the viewer's body and to her/his concrete presence in the concrete time and place of the exhibition. The space dictated the viewer's self-consciousness to the physical parameters that made up her/his presence in the present moment. The viewers became aware of having a vertical body, and measured themselves in relation to the elements that defined the space. The columns turned into abstractions of bodies without limbs, and the beams into abstractions of limbs without bodies. Untitled was not pure phenomenology, such as in American minimalism, but rather was a confrontation between phenomenology, devoted to interactive experience in space, and traumatic remembrance, calling attention to something which cannot be conveyed and which can only truly be indicated in absence alone. It is important to emphasize that even if Golinski's architectural action is driven by an archival impulse, not contending with the inheritance from the past, we cannot base the motivation behind the action solely on that urge, which Ulrich Loock, following Hal Foster, identified in the architecture-based works of such artists as Rachel Whiteread, Sam Durant or Tacita Dean*. In Golinski's work, there are different tensions.

Despite the varying degrees of presence and visibility in his work, when it comes to processing a traumatic past, Golinski does not resort to a demonstration of spectrality or dematerialization, but rather seeks to create unresolved reciprocal relations between the physical, mental and historical.

Without using iconographic illustrative means, Golinski created an experience that arrived at the historical through the phenomenological. He did not bring the past back to life in the sense of realist representation. According to Golinski, the past cannot be represented by conventional linguistic means, the use of which assumes overcoming or distancing. If I may be allowed to draw a general conclusion about representation from this particular work, Golinski refers to the past as something that is present, and that presence itself is awarded a status of its own. Presence is not the opposite of absence, but is instead a dynamic situation of appearance and the appearance of disappearance, potentiality and actuality, all in relation to a concrete experiencing body. If the phenomenological conception of the reciprocal relation between a work of art and the viewer's physical presence offers a utopian dimension of experience, then, in Golinski's version of these interdependent relations, utopia turns into dystopia, abstract into concrete, and physicality into vulnerability.

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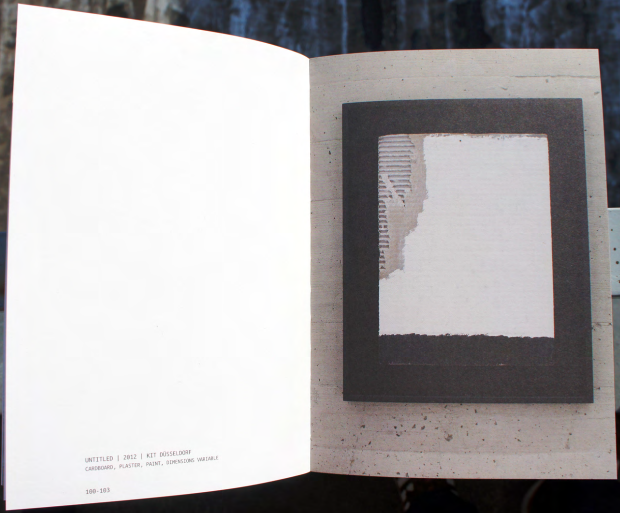
* *Ulrich Loock, Builders of the 20th Century, Exhibition Catalog Gregor Schneider, Serralves Foundation, Porto, p. 12.*



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