

# Stutti

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Stutti was the informal name for "Hotel Stuttgarter Hof," an erstwhile Berlin hotel that was squatted by artists from spring until late December 1988. Located at Anhalter Straße 9, our neighbors included the Gestapo headquarters (Topographie of Terror), the Martin Gropius Bau Museum and the shuttered Anhalter Bahnhof. Stutti's entrance and facade were pockmarked by shells from the war but otherwise in good condition. The entry hall was heavily damaged however, and acacias grew from a pile of rubble, through a hole in the first floor where Abraxa, a Spanish artist from Darmstadt, crafted a treehouse apartment for herself. Coming from the United States, Berlin offered me material evidence of a war I had previously taken only to exist on faith. Not only the buildings wore scars; one frequently encountered older men in the streets with missing limbs and other injuries.

At Hotel Stutti we found promotional materials for the facilities in the dining room; ephemera that led one to imagine it's heyday. Was it closed abruptly, or slowly suffocated by the division of Berlin? Two building wings were set in an EL-shape. A four-story structure with 60 rooms ran perpendicular to the street. Everyone had 3 or more rooms; the collective *Kommittee Präsens* the entire fourth floor. In the rear was a solid high-ceilinged main house with offices, meeting rooms, dining and banquet facilities that we used for studio and gallery space. There was a lovely courtyard garden where we ate in summer and fall beneath luxuriant trees and vines.

About twenty people, mostly artists, squatted the building. Spaces were organized for living, studio and exhibition space. I can't remember a real kitchen. We wired the entire building for electricity, and squirreled a telephone line from under the sidewalk- by digging through from the basement. Our one telephone was hidden in a pile of feathers in an ersatz grave, in an installation.

One of the exhilarating aspects of living in a raw building was the freedom to make holes in the walls, breaking through tiny boxes to remake one's space, all spaces, along the way exposing new views and the strata of construction from another era.

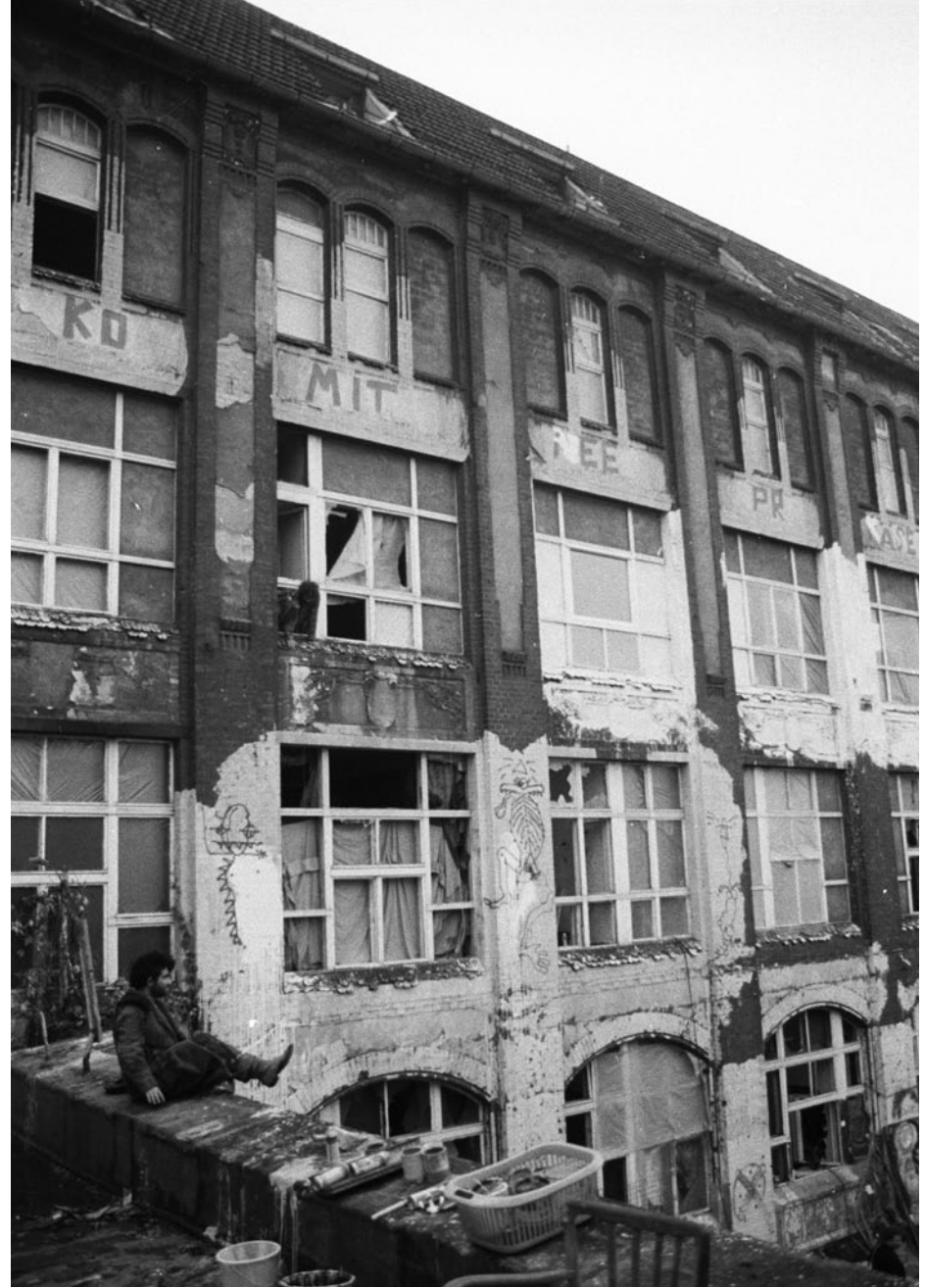
I built a darkroom on the third floor, hauling water down the hallway from the bathroom. This is where these photos were printed. Each month,



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we pulled together exhibitions of installation art and paintings, along with live acts by bands and performance artists. We charged one mark at the entrance and the party would go until dawn, usually netting about 1000 marks. The next day would begin with an opulent breakfast and heated discussion about how to divide the proceeds between art supplies, construction materials, food, and hashish. Each Sunday, we would pull a sledge to the Flömarkt, where we would pick up colorful and elegant clothing from the vendors' discards, sometimes tossing back our own dirty clothes from the week before. There was so much of use that people were just throwing away.

Stutti was next door to the famed KuKuCK (*Kunst- und Kultur-Centrum Kreuzberg*), a gigantic squat and cultural space that hosted punk music and experimental theater through the early 80s. Someone once showed me photographs of KuKuCK along with a normalization proposal they had prepared with the subsidy and blessings of the city. The idea was nonetheless rejected, the building razed. Less organized, we maintained open spaces for art practice as long as we were able and people came by to shoot films, perform in and use our studio spaces. Facing closure, we publicly protested at the nearby Martin Gropius Bau museum by chaining ourselves to the balcony railings amidst a DADA retrospective.



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A newspaper article about the protest led to visits by supporters and a curator who wanted to ship some of the art to another city. In a show of solidarity, people decided against breaking up the "collection."

A year or so later some former Stutti'ers joined with East Berlin artists to start Tacheles, again as a public exhibition space, but with a bar, kitchen, and more separation between living and work. I returned briefly, squatting a new house on Kleine Hamburger Straße with people from Stutti, the Synlabor collective, and Ramm Theater. We wrote a flyer for East Berliners that described how the transition to capitalism would threaten their housing security, and posted it the hallways of old buildings. I left on the day East Berliners were lined up at banks to exchange their Ostmarks for Deutschmarks.

