

die **DAS** docs

Monumental
Affairs
Living with
Contested
Spaces

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When we experienced the Saalecker Werkstätten together for the first time – its imposing ensemble looming over the Saale River near Naumburg – we quickly forged a plan to transform this historically troubled, “uncomfortable monument” into a sanctuary for contemporary cultural advancement. That moment in 2017 was the birth of dieDAS – Design Akademie Saaleck.

In 2018, Egidio Marzona acquired the historic site along with its dark and eventful history, inextricably entwined with the architect and racist ideologue Paul Schultze-Naumburg, and thus enabled the creation of the Marzona Stiftung Neue Saalecker Werkstätten (Marzona Foundation). In 1902, Schultze-Naumburg built his home in Saaleck and shortly afterwards founded the Saalecker Werkstätten, which soon became a platform for National Socialist propaganda and cultural politics. We felt strongly that the collective memory must never forget what evil was once expressed on these grounds.

As we write today, wars are raging, extreme right-wing parties are gaining strength, hate crimes are on the rise, and our environment is groaning under the gravity of the global climate crisis. In the context of these immense challenges, we are called to question the causes while at the same time envisioning innovative solutions. This effort requires both a critical examination of our past and the promotion of forward-looking ideas. It is at this interface that dieDAS is active.

The academy was founded to offer designers and other creatives opportunities for development, research, and networking, rooted in the deep conviction that spaces of open exchange are essential to the design of paradigm-shifting and socially relevant processes capable of enriching our present and future coexistence. Accordingly, the Marzona Foundation has established dieDAS as a new space for free thought, experimentation, and interdisciplinary discourse that brings together a diverse international community of scholars, designers, architects, craftspeople, artists, scientists, partner institutions, and more to explore urgent topics, from material ecology, sustainability, and organic design to climate, justice, and democracy.

dieDAS has been hosting events since 2019. At the annual Open House, we invite interested parties from Saaleck and the surrounding area to explore the site and personally experience its evolution. Together with the dieDAS team and our rotating artistic directors – to date acclaimed designers Maurizio Montalti (2020–22) and Germane Barnes (2023–24) – we have developed two formats for the international creative community: the dieDAS Fellowship Program and the dieDAS walk + talk Symposium. We are proud of the impressive roster of leading-edge thinkers and practitioners that these events have already engaged and grateful for the participants’ ongoing collaboration.

With this publication, we have the opportunity not only to reflect on what dieDAS has accomplished in its first few years but also to delve deeper into our latest area of focus, Monumental Affairs: Living with Contested Places, the theme of our 2023 fellowship program and walk + talk Symposium led by Barnes.

In his role as dieDAS Artistic Director, Barnes has chosen to interrogate monuments from a sociopolitical perspective and to understand architecture as a vehicle for an alternative historiography. Through our programs, the Monumental Affairs theme confronts the legacy of contaminated pasts that live on in our built environment and examines the narratives, purposes, and canonization of buildings and monuments in a range of contexts. Vital questions include: Who determines what architecture enters the canon, and how? What overt and subtle forms of oppression are at work? And in what ways can the concept of public space be used to dismantle contested monuments?

dieDAS promotes change with the aim of transforming our own historically contaminated site into a cultural beacon whose light may be visible far beyond the borders of Saaleck and Naumburg. We are at the beginning of a multiyear renovation project following a design by Danish architect Dorte Mandrup. In the coming years, the old buildings will gradually be put to new use so that more and more events, workshops, and thematically relevant explorations can be offered to local and international communities. This vision would not be possible without the decisive support of the State of Saxony-Anhalt and the Federal Republic of Germany accompanied by a growing number of committed partners from Germany and abroad.

In the heart of Germany, dieDAS – Design Akademie Saaleck intends to set a resolute and tangible example in Europe and the world for unrestricted creative freedom and for the power of change in a democratic society.

Egidio Marzona, Andreas Silbersack, Arne Cornelius Wasmuth
Board of Directors, Marzona Foundation

FOREWORD

INTRODUCTION

Monumental Affairs: Living with Contested Spaces asks a fundamental question: What is a monument? Traditionally, the term connotes structures designed with the explicit intention to express and instill respect for people, places, and events that have impacted the societies that surround them. By convention, monuments are conceived as permanent, unchanging, and highly visible invocations to current and future generations to never forget the values imparted by the memorialized subjects.

The agency to bestow official monumental status – and therefore to decide which communal virtues are most worthy of celebration and preservation – has historically belonged to those who wield the most economic, social, and political power. Consequently, the most visible and imposing monuments, along with the values they embody, often serve to reinforce existing hierarchies, entrenching unjust systems bent on suppressing marginalized and dissenting voices. Today, amid heightened critiques of the enduring effects of deeply rooted inequities, exploitation, and erasure, the traditional definition of what constitutes a monument, and who decides, has begun to crumble.

Against this critical backdrop, this volume – the first book published by dieDAS – Design Akademie Saaleck – adopts an expansive, progressive interpretation of monuments in order to probe another, more complex question: If monuments are understood as the embodiments of a society's collective memory, shared ideals, and unifying identity, how then can they be conceptualized, constructed, and preserved to represent a greater diversity of perspectives, disrupt oppressive power structures, and promote positive change in a world rife with compounding social and environmental crises?

The title and topic of *Monumental Affairs: Living with Contested Spaces* are inspired by the theme that dieDAS Artistic Director Germane Barnes chose for the institution's 2023 fellowship program and walk + talk Symposium. Through the discursive framework outlined in his curatorial statement and developed in his 2023 curriculum at dieDAS, the Miami-based architect and educator invited the programs' participants to explore facets of monuments and monument-making beyond conventional definitions, recognizing the existence of many kinds of monuments – formal and informal, intentional and unintentional, beneficial and harmful – and their relationship to issues surrounding race, immigration, displacement, and nationalism, among others.

An essential principle lies at the heart of Barnes's theme: the structures we erect are intrinsically entwined with the values we most honor. Through

this lens, the mutable and subjective nature of monumentality comes into focus. As a society evolves over time, the monuments of its past are inevitably reassessed, even contested; demands to erect new and destroy old monuments emerge and compete; and existing structures acquire monument-like meanings that they were not originally designed to express. When we examine more closely the feedback loop between what we collectively value and what we collectively build, our understanding of monumentality widens even further. We begin to see that monuments exist around us everywhere, wherever communities feel the impact of cultural, economic, and political ideologies manifested in their physical surroundings. Our cities, landscapes, and homes are all monuments, of a kind, to the systems in which they were shaped.

Section I of this book, entitled “Monumental Affairs,” expounds on Barnes’s multidimensional theme, illuminating our understanding of monuments through five distinct yet complementary, thought-provoking, and timely essays. Of the five contributors included in this section, it should be noted, the first four also spoke at dieDAS’s 2023 walk + talk Symposium, including Barnes himself.

Barnes’s essay, “The Power of Architecture,” unpacks the personal experiences that magnified for him the myriad ways that architecture, in theory and practice, has the capacity to either perpetuate or push back against the power structures that engender systems of segregation and oppression – a focus that in turn informed his vision for dieDAS’s 2023 programming. In “Memory Is Momentum,” New Orleans-based architect and design justice advocate Bryan C. Lee, Jr., also shares a poignant, personal account, revealing how his great-grandfather’s appalling experience as a Black man buying a home in a white neighborhood is emblematic of the white supremacist ideology etched into US-America’s built fabric. Lee champions design as a tool of protest, a weapon in the arsenal against entrenched systems that withhold wealth, health, and opportunity from Black and Brown communities.

Paris-based architect and urban planner Meriem Chabani’s essay, “Sanctuaries of Care in Uncertain Times,” argues that our current global crises, from climate change to widespread social unrest, are the inevitable outcome of capitalist hegemony, fueled by a venal ethos that regards everything on earth as fodder for exploitation in pursuit of limitless economic growth. The path towards a more just and resilient world, according to Chabani, begins by cultivating a culture of care for the planet and all its inhabitants, which entails designating some resources as sacred, inviolate, off-limits for temporal gain. Magdeburg-based Professor of Sociology Matthias Quent likewise lays bare the deleterious impacts of inhumane and oppressive worldviews, in particular reactionary, right-wing sociopolitical movements cloaked in the language of nature conservation. His essay, “Spaces and Ideologies of Inequality in the Climate Crisis,” warns against the insidious, pseudoscientific lies that underpin eat-or-be-eaten social Darwinism and xenophobic eco-fascism and perpetuate untold acts of violence against both people and the environment.

Cambridge-based architect and academic Sarah M. Whiting, Dean of Harvard Graduate School of Design (GSD) and member of the dieDAS

Advisory Board, concludes the first section of this publication with “Monumental Consistencies and Complexities.” Here, Whiting reviews important debates over monument-making from the last century of architectural history alongside promising currents in twenty-first-century discourse and practice – including work being done at Harvard GSD and dieDAS. Like the other contributors to this publication, she underscores the need for architects and designers to consider not only the functions that our built environments fulfill, but also the values that they express.

Importantly, Barnes’s Monumental Affairs theme dovetails with dieDAS’s overarching mission – beyond the 2023 programming – and shines a light on the twofold, interconnected mandates conceived at the institution’s foundation five years ago by the Marzona Foundation. On the one hand, dieDAS is an academy dedicated to bringing together interdisciplinary, intersectional practitioners and thinkers working at the leading edge of design, architecture, and craft to explore forward-facing, socially conscious approaches to urgent global issues in an atmosphere of open exchange. At the same time, dieDAS exists to confront the dark history of the site that it calls home, the Saalecker Werkstätten, which was designed and built by racist ideologue Paul Schultze-Naumburg just after the turn of the twentieth century and survives today as an “uncomfortable monument.” This publication, therefore, continues with a series of essays and interviews that reflect on dieDAS’s ambitious vision for building a reconciliatory bridge between the horrific failures of the past and humanity’s highest aspirations for the future by harnessing the power of education, dialogue, and creative collaboration.

Section II, “Saalecker Werkstätten,” delves into the sensitive steps that dieDAS is undertaking to disarm the uncomfortable monument status of its campus. In her essay, “The Making of an Uncomfortable Monument,” Daniela Spiegel, Professor of Heritage Conservation and Architectural History at the Bauhaus-Universität Weimar, traces the hateful history of the Saalecker Werkstätten and explains why the harm that was inflicted by its architect should neither be erased from collective memory nor uplifted through traditional monumental framing. As an uncomfortable monument, the site must be transformed to benefit society in direct contradiction to the racist, antisemitic values once espoused there. In “The Transformation of an Uncomfortable Monument,” Stephan Kujas, Monument Conservator for the City of Weißenfels, outlines how dieDAS is meeting this objective, both through the creation of an archival research center that preserves knowledge of the site’s past as well as through its repurposing in the service of nurturing positive outcomes for the wider world. Penned by Copenhagen-based architect Dorte Mandrup, “Exposing, Leaving, Adding” previews the Saalecker Werkstätten’s next, transformative chapter. Mandrup’s renovation design, which will be completed in a few years, will allow dieDAS to welcome larger audiences in Saaleck and amplify its values-driven mission.

Section III, entitled “dieDAS – Design Akademie Saaleck,” surveys the progress that dieDAS has made in its crucial, first five years, articulated through a collection of interviews with some of the team members and participants

who have played key roles in bringing the young academy's mission to life. As an ensemble, these first-hand accounts constitute a cross-sectional oral history of the conceptualization and implementation of dieDAS's central initiatives, including the annual fellowship program and walk + talk Symposium, among others. These voices bear witness to the earnest, collaborative spirit that suffuses dieDAS's programming, painting a heartfelt picture of the impacts already felt within the community alongside the advancements we can expect from the academy in the near and long terms.

Every year, a fresh cohort of international fellows, mentors, speakers, and visitors assemble at dieDAS to question and reinvigorate the site anew, leveraging design's boundless creative toolbox to break down and reimagine topics of far-reaching resonance. Rather than museumize the Saalecker Werkstätten or obscure their dark legacy, dieDAS is committed to transforming a monument of pain into an emblem of hope; an evolving learning space that facilitates clear-eyed assessments of living histories; and a dynamic design laboratory where prescient and passionate talents representing diverse perspectives, experiences, and expertise cooperate to envision a more just, equitable, and sustainable future. Within this specific microcosm, at the nexus of these creative and cultural exchanges, dieDAS and its expanding community of collaborators are working to build a world that honors humanity's loftiest values.

Anna Carnick and Wava Carpenter
Curators, Editors, and Cofounders of Anava Projects

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I. Monumental Affairs

Monumental Affairs: Living with Contested Spaces The 2023 dieDAS Fellowship Program Thematic Statement

As historically excluded voices increasingly expose the failures and discriminatory practices of the architecture and urbanism fields, a holistic, constructive examination of these disciplines becomes all the more pressing. Global terror and dissent typically identified as political and militaristic have slowly revealed their spatial influences. Design justice continues to peak through creases often closed shut by popular architectural theory and discourse. This shift towards a more egalitarian and non-Western intellectual approach is the impetus for the 2023 iteration of the dieDAS Fellowship, Monumental Affairs. Within this framework, designers, theorists, architects, critics, and beyond are challenged to posit the necessity of monuments.

Monumental Affairs asks: How does the process of canonization come to fruition? Who determines which architecture becomes part of the canon? What overt or subtle forms of oppression are inherent in this process? How does one utilize the public sphere to dismantle these canonized monuments?

Situated in Saaleck, Germany, at the former home of German architect and racist ideologue Paul Schultze-Naumburg

(and a one-time hub for the country's totalitarian National Socialists), dieDAS presents fellows a fraught yet fertile environment in which to deploy acts of tactical urbanism as a means of architectural and spatial resistance. During their stay, the interdisciplinary cohort will attempt to use architecture as a vehicle for alternative histories. The speculation of design ideas will support workshops surrounding race, ethnicity, immigration, displacement, and nationalism. Monumental Affairs acknowledges the nationalist agenda of this historic site, its contested legacy, and its explicit exclusion of non-white constructors.

By addressing these issues directly – and mindful of the urgency and opportunity posed by our current global climate – dieDAS aims to cultivate an environment of rigor, reflection, and imagination.

Germane Barnes
dieDAS Artistic Director 2023–24



1. dieDAS Fellowship Program 2023, Monumental Affairs participants: (back to front) Director of Program & Development Tatjana Sprick, Founding Director Arne Cornelius Wasmuth, Artistic Director Germane Barnes, Fellow Antoinette Yetunde Oni, Head Mentor Zeno Franchini, Fellow Adam Maserow, Fellow Yassine Ben Abdallah, and Fellow Silvia Susanna



2. dieDAS Fellowship Program 2023 excursion to Saaleck Castle: (left to right) Mentor Mo Asumang, Fellow Silvia Susanna, Fellow Antoinette Yetunde Oni, Fellow Yassine Ben Abdallah, Head Mentor Zeno Franchini, Artistic Director Germane Barnes, Fellow Adam Maserow
3. dieDAS Artistic Director Germane Barnes with 2023 Fellows Silvia Susanna, Adam Maserow, Yassine Ben Abdallah





5. Workshop led by Colin Hacklander and Farahnaz Hatam of Studio Labour during the dieDAS Fellowship Program 2023
6. Mentor Kenny Cupers in conversation with Fellow Adam Maserow during the dieDAS Fellowship Program 2023



7. Workshop led by Ido Nahari, editor of *Arts of the Working Class*, during the dieDAS Fellowship Program 2023
8. Head Mentor Zeno Franchini in conversation with Mentor Kenny Cupers and Fellow Antoinette Yetunde Oni during the dieDAS Fellowship Program 2023