



**THE RIVER Monument**  
a Hundrich Project  
2025



**Whoever saves a single life,  
saves the whole world.**

And whoever destroys a life - by  
violence, by oppression, by terror,  
whether physical or psychological -  
do they not also destroy the world?



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## Part I

Documentation and Memorial Site of the  
Former Stasi Pre-Trial Detention Center in Rostock  
and at the Kunsthalle Rostock

On the Democratic Value of Art

**Chapter 1: THEY / a Mosaic of Destruction**

**Chapter 2: THE CIRCLE / A Space for Unity and Reflection**

**Chapter 3: THE RIVER / A Path through Pain and Hope**

## Part II / The River Monument

The Big Question

The Human Material

THE RIVER – A Timeless Statement

THE RIVER as a Memorial Space for Remembrance

## EPILOGUE



At the beginning of this project stood a question:  
What is the democratic value of art? Then came paper and pencil.  
And in the end—this project.

### **THE RIVER - An Exhibition in Three Chapters**

#### **The Democratic Value of Art**

Art is the foundation of an open and free society. It holds within it the power of expression—the courage to question, to expose false truths, to reveal life in both its rawness and its beauty.

Tyrants and extremists always strike art first. They forbid it, destroy it, burn it. They know why. They despise the freedom of the individual—the power of independent thought, of self-determined action. Diversity and difference are thorns in their side. They crush anything that does not conform to their narrow vision of the world. Their actions follow a singular delusion: that only their truth matters.

They erase what binds people together across cultures, what protects humanity, what strengthens our collective spirit.

Art is a way to grasp the contradictions of the world—to see its brutality, but also its potential. This exhibition is my artistic attempt to make destruction, resistance, and humanity visible.

To ask questions. To search for answers.  
To build bridges where none seem to exist.

## Chapter 1: THEY - A Mosaic of Destruction

As I created the images for this chapter, I felt like a chronicler of violence. Each piece portrays a scene that has become a symbol of devastation: a house in flames, a helping hand crushed before it can give aid, a burning bed—the loss of safety and home.

These images form a mosaic—fragments of pain and destruction that, when placed together, reveal a larger story. Forces of ruin, coming from different directions, seemingly unconnected, yet united in their purpose: to annihilate humanity and democracy.



## Chapter 2: The Circle - A Space for Unity and Reflection

This chapter stands as a counterpoint. The circle—an ancient symbol of infinity - embodies the cycle of life, death, and rebirth.

A circle of oversized shirts, crafted from emergency blankets, symbolizes the unity that can connect us as human beings—yet also its fragility. These golden rescue blankets, universal symbols of aid and protection, remind us of the vulnerability of life. Their shine speaks of hope, but also forces us to confront essential questions:

What defines human existence?

What holds us together?

What gives life a human meaning?

Yet within the stark reality of the former Stasi prison, the circle was confined - trapped within the limits of its oppressive walls. What was once a perfect form, a symbol of wholeness, collapsed under the weight of restriction. The envisioned dignity of the human being could not unfold. It was imprisoned. Crushed. Destroyed—ideologically, systematically.

### Chapter 3: The River - My Personal Journey Through Pain and Hope

Performance: Lydia Klammer / Music: Theo Jörgensmann

This chapter moves me the most, for it was shaped by a place that confronted me, inescapably, with Germany's past.

Originally, the river was a flowing stream of emergency blankets—a symbol of humanity caught in a cycle, forever threatened by inhumanity. But as I stepped into the former Stasi detention center, the river transformed. It became a Via Dolorosa—a path of suffering.

THE RIVER stands as a tribute to all those who suffered under systems of oppression—those who were tortured, broken, murdered. It remains, a silent witness to both past and present. Yet for me, it is also a symbol of hope: Humanity can be destroyed, but it will always rise again.





## Why This Exhibition is Personal

I cannot speak of this work without revealing my own connection to it. Many of the images and scenes were born from personal experience. They are shaped by places I have visited, stories that have touched me, moments that have burned themselves into my consciousness.

Many times, as I worked on this exhibition, I was overwhelmed by the weight of memory—the echoes of suffering, the depths of human resilience. I thought of all those, past and present, who are silenced, stripped of their freedom, erased from history.

This exhibition is my response to the question: How do we confront destruction and division?

At a time when authoritarian forces are once again growing louder, when human dignity is once again being questioned, I refuse to remain silent. Art, for me, is also resistance. It gives us a voice when words fail in the face of rising brutality. *THE RIVER* reminds us that humanity is not a given. It is a choice—one we must make, again and again. Through our actions, through our art, through our defiance. **The question is not whether we can do something. The question is—will we?**





## THE RIVER Monument

**The Great Question: Why does man inflict such inhumanity upon his fellow man?**

This singular question is the heartbeat of THE RIVER. It carries the project beyond the personal, beyond its point of origin. It expands into a universal, timeless reflection on human history—on what endures, what recurs, what refuses to fade.

Violence, war, oppression, destruction, flight—why are these so deeply woven into the fabric of human existence? Why do they course through time like an unrelenting river, from the earliest wars of antiquity to our present day? A river—never ceasing, never yielding.

And yet—time and again, interrupted by moments of hope.

### "Human Material"—A Brutal Reality

For centuries, humans have been reduced to mere material—malleable, exploitable, disposable. A body, a shadow, a number. Stripped of name, dignity, and worth. Interchangeable to the point of oblivion.

But man is not material.

THE RIVER embodies this truth—not as a rigid monument, not as an immovable sculpture, but as a living, breathing work of art. A body in motion, a testament to the endless cycle of violence—and the hope that one day, this river may finally cease to flow.

The performance makes the "human material" visible:

- as an emergency blanket—light, fragile, protective, yet itself unprotected,
- as a body—a symbol of vulnerability and dignity,
- as movement—an eternal rhythm of despair and resurrection.

The river of emergency blankets becomes a scar upon the landscape.

A trace of a primal trauma.

An echo of those who were never heard.

A sign of that which repeats.

"Never again"—a warning, a promise.

But what does Never again mean when yesterday refuses to pass?

Never again is now.

**Reckoning does not begin tomorrow. It begins today.**



## EPILOGUE

**THE RIVER Monument** is more than a political or social work – it is a timeless statement, a reflection of our shared human journey. It flows through history, carrying the voices of those who have lived, those who live now, and those yet to come.

When I speak of “humanity,” I mean all people – beyond borders, beyond beliefs, beyond the ties of family and nation. There is something universal that unites us: the essence of being human. My art seeks to capture this essence – the emotions, experiences, and struggles that connect us all.



**At its core, THE RIVER MONUMENT is a tribute to humanity:**

- It stands in the tradition of great memorials – from Maya Lin’s Vietnam Veterans Memorial to the Holocaust Memorial in Berlin.
- It merges performance, sculpture, and social intervention – echoing the work of Joseph Beuys, Marina Abramović, and Santiago Sierra.
- It employs a simple yet profoundly charged material (rescue blankets), much like Ai Weiwei or the Arte Povera movement.
- It has the potential to exist not only as a fleeting performance but as a permanent monument, cast in bronze or brass in a public space – like the works of Richard Serra or Jenny Holzer.

**THE RIVER** is not just about remembrance or protest. It is a human response to inhumanity. A monument to those who have suffered. A monument to those who refuse to forget. And, above all, a monument to democracy.

*Man’s sense of justice makes democracy possible.  
His inclination to injustice makes democracy necessary.*  
— Reinhold Niebuhr

*Democracy is our most precious possession. Preserving it is both a duty and a responsibility. It requires constant, determined, and self-aware engagement – a willingness to struggle for compromise and lasting consensus. These are the foundations of the only political order that can guarantee freedom.*  
— Wolfgang Thierse, President of the German Bundestag

Pampin, April 2025  
Herbert W. H. Hundrich



## **Imprint**

**THE RIVER.2025**  
a Hundrich Project

### **Chapter III**

Performance: Lydia Klammer  
Music: Theo Jörgensmann

**Documentation and  
Memorial Site of the  
Former Stasi Pre-Trial  
Detention Center (DuG) /  
Kunsthalle Rostock**

### **Film Documentation:**

Camera: Ursula Hundrich /  
Jan Heidebreck + Hundrich  
[//youtu.be/D20tQJAhtus](https://youtu.be/D20tQJAhtus)  
12:46'

### **Photography:**

Thomas Häntzschel, p. 6  
- Hundrich

### **The Original**

#### **Technical Information:**

#### **Material:**

Emergency blankets  
Total length: 40 m  
Average width: 3.30 m

### **THE RIVER MONUMENT**

Material: Bronze  
total length: 40 m  
average width: 3,30 m

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