

An aerial photograph of a large-scale construction site, likely a dam or a major infrastructure project. The image shows a dense grid of concrete pillars or piers arranged in a regular pattern across a vast area. The ground is a mix of dark earth, grey concrete, and some green vegetation. The overall scene is one of intense engineering and construction activity.

CYPRIEN GAILLARD  
FRANKFURTER  
SCHACHT

TAUNUSANLAGE

EN

# CYPRIEN GAILLARD FRANKFURTER SCHACHT



The sculpture is situated between Taunusanlage S-Bahn station entrances 3 and 4, opposite the address Taunusanlage 12, 60325 Frankfurt am Main.

At the edge of the Wallanlagen green belt—the former rampart that used to separate the city center from its outlying districts—a gray ventilation shaft stands among the various monuments and memorials between the financial and red-light districts. Only inside the shaft does the sculpture come into view. Surrounded and protected by pink, and in the gentle flow of air and water, the view opens into the sky. Accessible day and night for everyone, the shaft closes if needed.

Every public space is political; every public space is social. The idea at its core is its free accessibility and individual utilization. It is designed and organized by the public sector: in this case the parks commission, the office of public monuments, and the municipal museum. Once realized, its use is wholly individual and can depart from how it was imagined. Cyprien Gaillard concerned himself with this site over a period of two years and created a sculpture that neither pays homage nor commemorates, neither extols nor warns, but simply serves. In the midst of the public space, it offers a place of intimacy.

## The Taunusanlage

Livia Gerster

There are the unequivocal places, where you know exactly what to look for. And there are the other places. Places like the Taunusanlage. In the case of human beings, one might speak of biographical discontinuities. In the Taunusanlage, that tiny bit of park between the Deutsche Bank high-rises and Theaterplatz, you can even see the discontinuities, cracks, and abrasions, the old stones and weather-worn inscriptions, even if they're mostly overgrown with grass—lush, green grass with a few heroin needles among its blades.

A place of nature, theoretically. There are trees and bushes, rabbits, squirrels, mice, rats, crows, blackbirds, magpies, wasps, and bumblebees. You might think it's a good place for animals, but the local newspapers tell a different story. Squirrels die of mysterious causes, the parks commission hunts the overprolific rabbits to death, and the birds, oh my: they take the bluish-green-reflecting high-rise façades for gateways to food paradise, crash into them by the hundreds, break their necks, end of story.

So is this little spot of green a cemetery for mangled thrushes? Or a place for pallid townfolk to get a breath of air? The Taunusanlage continues as the Gallusanlage, which continues as the Untermainanlage, and so on, together forming the Wallanlagen, an attractive green belt around the city center. As a park they're a joke, of course, if that's what anyone should want to call these parcels of nature incarcerated between glass, concrete, and exhaust fumes, but as a respite from the scorching asphalt, they're okay.

The green belt describes the course once taken by the Frankfurt city walls. Ample fields and vagabonds without, the temptations of the late medieval city within. The Taunustor (Taunus Gate) was closed every evening until into the nineteenth century. Anyone who wanted to enter had to pay a fee and probably had to look like they belonged, just like you do to enter the Robert Johnson club today. Walls and moats for fortification purposes have long been a thing of the past, but the Wallanlagen still separate outside from in—the residential districts with their breakfast cafés and prams from the city center with its buzzing shops and open-plan offices. Anyone who wants to enter, to go from bed to hustle and bustle, crosses them.

The numbers peak in the morning around half past eight when the critical bicycle masses gush along the green belt's paths, helmeted and panting, pedaling their child cargo forward or breezing by one-handedly. They pass on the right, left, and cross-turf, blind, of course, to dead kingfishers, but at least sidewheeling it when kindergarten companies totter their way hand in hand in tiny high-visibility vests.

Those high-visibility vests wouldn't be a bad thing for the tourists either, as their cell phones drag them along on outstretched arms—or for anyone without a conveyance, come to think of it, because there are also the scooter riders pelting by on electric power, only to jump off the next instant and dash away, leaving a tangle of scooter jackstraws behind.

At midday, when the bicycle storm has ebbed, the bankers from the skyscrapers descend on the scene, devour their avocado salads under chestnut trees, then shed the cardboard packaging like ballast before zipping back up to their offices in high-speed elevators, ears a-popping.

So much for the guests passing through en route to points beyond, but the Taunusanlage also has something like inhabitants. The families at the chess tables, for example, with children large and small, playing their games, rain or shine. And the men carrying out their business transactions in the bushes after sunset when the blue-laser-eyed rabbits emerge from their burrows. Quietly, secretly, cash, powder, and little lumps change hands; here and there a lighter flares up under a spoon as an urban jogger with a well-tempered pulse does her laps.

The era of the big narcotics excesses in the Taunusanlage is long past; the *Frankfurter Weg* (the city's drug policy) took the addicts off the dim streets and put them in well-lit junkie centers. In more recent years, however, addiction has again driven more and more people from the station district to the park behind the big euro sign. Apropos euro: cheap money is also a kind of drug, the economic journalists point out, and the world is hooked on replenishment from the European Central Bank that was headquartered here until just a few years ago. There's probably as good a reason for the obtrusive metaphor as there is for the spatial proximity between the bankers and the junkies, the former shooting up one substance, the latter another. But why not take the whole thing a step further? The most creditworthy debtors and the purest China White both get a triple A rating. Securities and

cocaine, toxic and laced, make their rounds. The dealing goes on upstairs and down, but whereas upstairs a lot turns into more, on the ground a lot ends in nothing.

And it all plays out, by the way, behind the back of a mighty stone Friedrich Schiller, proudly and sulkily overseeing the entrance to the garden—proud because he's been standing there for so long, sulky because the bank towers have long surpassed him in height. Someone propped a bottle of Tegernseer Helles (beer) in his hand, perhaps a bashful homage. And there are all kinds of other sculptures standing around in the Taunusanlage like junk in an attic: here a ponderous war monument, there a pathetic *Winzerbrunnen* (vintner's fountain). Even Snow White, guarded by the Seven Dwarfs, lies in repose like a drug-related death in the very midst of where junkies frolicked in the nineties.

Three bronze figures overtower the others from atop a hill: the *Sinnende* (Musing) and the *Rufende* (Calling) as female allegories, along with the genius of Beethoven himself, naked and strong. A work by Georg Kolbe, like the smaller Heinrich Heine statue farther down, toppled by the Nazis but back in its place since the war's end.

Quite an array has accumulated. If the city should ever be short of funds, it could certainly rake in a few—now more, now less—on Horst Lichter's popular televised auction show *Bares für Rares* (Cash for Curiosities). And who knows, maybe someone would even take a fancy to the *Winzerbrunnen*.

A haphazard open-air museum that no one visits but a lot of people pass through. Or has anyone ever actually been seen pausing in wonder in front of one of the sculptures? No, they are of concern to no one, but simply another part of the scene, like the rabbits, the bankers, and the chess players who lead a completely indifferent and more or less peaceful coexistence apart from the occasional mugging.

Have we seen everything here? No. Once you take note of them, you realize they're all over the place, literally everywhere, attracting even less attention than the artworks: junction boxes, drains, and hydrants—non-objects of a technical kind which we walk on and past as if they weren't even there, although subconsciously we know that they fulfil a purpose right where they're doing their part to spoil nature.

Folks probably think the four-meter-high shaft at the upper end of the Taunusanlage is just such a trivial necessity,

as round as an advertising pillar, but not touting a single film or any other cultural event. A pipsqueak compared to the twin towers behind them—*Soll und Haben* (Debit and Credit), as the Frankfurters call them, as though the Deutsche Bank did business the way an *Apfelwein* (apple cider) joint does.

But he or she who chances to take a look inside the shaft will not want to leave again so quickly. Pebble-gray on the outside, a delicate, white-veined pink like flesh within. Those who enter are immediately surrounded by an onyx glow, while the view of the sky remains open: a perfect circle of blue.

A public restroom and indeed a restful place on this stretch of roaring street, and cozier than many a flat-share john. “Why can you never enter sculptures?,” wondered Cyprien Gaillard on a tour of the park. He knocked on one of the large bronze figures, the one dedicated to the genius of Beethoven, and hearkened the hollow sound: “It makes you want to somehow go inside.”

You’re allowed to go inside *Frankfurter Schacht*, creep under its skin and breath as if through a pore. The door closes to bring the walls full circle—a circle two armlengths in diameter and yet infinitely vast. The world remains outside, you yourself alone. Not lonely, but with only yourself to count on, safe and ready for anything. Between groping hands and rushing ears, you might turn around your own axis and up to the highest heights. Maybe you’ll think of your own birth, maybe of the climate disaster, virus variants, or the future of the major political party. A monument of a unique kind, for letting your mind wander off the straight and narrow, unobtrusively beautiful, secular or sacred, however you like.

## Frankfurter Schacht

Carlotta Döhn and Lea Welsch

The sculpture *Frankfurter Schacht* (Frankfurt Shaft, 2021), is an anti-monumental spatialization that explores the value and visibility of art in public space. The shaft is located at the foot of the Deutsche Bank’s twin towers in the Taunusanlage, a section of the green belt following the course of the historical Wallanlagen and surrounding the city’s high-rises. The bit of green merges with the gray of the concrete and the reflecting glass façades. *Frankfurter Schacht* blends into this picture as well and is indistinguishable from the functional elements of the urban space. It is only when one enters its interior that the sculpture comes into its own.

The Taunusanlage serves as a link between Frankfurt’s financial and rail station districts. As such, it is shaped by life realities that could hardly be more different and have inscribed themselves in the sociopolitical history of the site. In view of the various attempts to banish them from the increasingly gentrified station district, drug users and homeless persons look to the strip of green as a refuge. At the same time, the city’s best-paid employees—lawyers and bankers—take their lunch breaks there.

A large number of monuments and sculptures underscore the Taunusanlage’s cultural significance. It is a place where multiple art experiences and memories culminate, where a historical-revisionist war monument can appear beside symbolic figures that stand for the majority society’s historical consciousness: an over-life-size statue of Schiller and the three bronze statues paying homage to the “genius of Beethoven,” for example. There are also sculptures by contemporary artists and a memorial to the people who have died of drug abuse. We encounter abstract artworks, naturalistic monuments, a wide range of materials, a rich formal language. Nevertheless, the aura emitted by these sculptures is fragile. They are used, they are covered with graffiti tags. They are omnipresent and thus unsurprising, ordinary, easy to overlook.

*Frankfurter Schacht* offers an antithesis, quotes the idea of sculpture and takes it further. The aesthetic experience is anti-monumental; it negates and radicalizes the logic of art in the public sphere. This is a process that already begins with its location—not at the center of the pompous park, but at its edge, next to a busy four-lane thoroughfare.

Far from obtrusive, the shaft blends in with its surroundings to such a degree as to become virtually invisible.

This differentness becomes even more apparent upon entering the work. While sculptures and monuments declaring themselves as such exhibit hollow bodies, *Frankfurter Schacht* opens its hollow interior. This immersive quality allows one to become part of the work and lose oneself in its stillness, its light, in the look and feel of its material.

The concrete shaft is encased in iron-gray-glowing sheet metal of the kind usually used for streetlamps, bollards, and guardrails. The door, open just a crack, is barely perceivable from the outside. On the inside, the concave metal of the door has been oxidized to a matt gray. In place of a doorknob is a twisted aluminum ring that is cold to the touch. This ring makes it possible to close the door, to shut out the world outside.

It is a sensation much like entering a cave; one finds oneself surrounded by walls several meters high. The near-transparent, shimmering pink stone lends the pipe-shaped shaft an odd sense of depth. One can almost imagine how the dynamic patterns were once rinsed into the stone, layer by layer. Black veins reveal the faults and chemical processes etched in the material's memory and testify to the stone's ongoing vitality. Static, virtually dead from the outside, in its core the shaft holds an organism that has grown and developed over thousands, even millions of years. A block of the fragile carbonate rock was processed, cut by cut, for the sculpture. Each cut took nearly a day. The rounded slabs were then arranged in such a way as to spiral downward to the depths of the open-roofed shaft. Their formation brings out the bifurcations in the stone structure and creates a vortex that loses itself in the view of the sky. Next to the clarity of the natural forces recalled by the stone, the bank buildings look almost cute by comparison—nothing but sheets of glass, concrete walls, steel, stacked one on top of the other, repairable, demolishable, perishable.

The work quotes and stages contrasts. Surrounded by symbols of financial-market capitalism, the onyx is an expression of natural authenticity. A stone whose layers, veins, and interstratifications question most people's historical consciousness. A testimony that, as a narrative of prehuman experience enclosed in particles millions of years old, rises above all ideologies, wars, and power struggles by revealing them as but a tiny slice of our planet's existence.

A cultural substance, the material also stands for the banks' surroundings, while at the same time, in its processing and arrangement, pointing far beyond them. And it places itself at the service of those who spend time or pass by in front of the towers. The shaft is a place of rest, a means of withdrawing from the world, of escaping—if only momentarily—the conditions to which the urban social space subjects the individual.

A look downward through the grid reveals the flushing system below, and with it the object's functional dimension. The secluded space also serves entirely mundane needs. Apart from the sculpture, and invisible to those on the outside, are tanks set into the ground to collect the urine of those who relieve themselves here. The mixing of the same represents a utopia of equality that remains inaccessible to view in the sculpture's substructure. The work's service function demonstrates—and carries to an extreme—the idea of the "viewer" performatively becoming part of the work. It remains to be seen what traces the urine will leave behind on the stone and the urinal in its environment.

Through its location at the edge of the Taunusanlage, of all places, the urinal represents the symbolic discourse on the city's neo-liberalization. The urban milieu is a functional and hierarchized space, a visually accessible and controllable one. The urinal, on the other hand, as a private space, is inaccessible to view and seems at odds with its surroundings. Sanitary spaces are usually gendered spaces, and thus bones of identity-political contention. In *Frankfurter Schacht*, you can pee regardless of gender, age, or social position.

The view from the men's pissoir on the top floor of the Commerzbank building is famous. With its costly natural onyx walls, the *Schacht* parodies—indeed parades—that symbol of society's power structures. The polished stone found in the toilets, faucets, and functional elements in the high-rises affords no view of its structure, but merely mirrors its beholders, thus, whether deliberately or not, serving narcissistic needs. Gaillard's work, on the other hand, comments on the dominant architecture surrounding the park and the power relations inscribed in them.

Urination is one of the most natural and basic human functions. One might think of it as a way in which we are all equal. In a world in which social inequality is growing exponentially as a social divide, however, this imagined equality takes on an entirely different meaning. To compare is to level. It would fall short of the mark to conceive of

*Frankfurter Schacht* as an allegory of these complex issues. But neither can it be entirely dissociated from them. At this specific place, the sculpture has the power to point beyond the place. Not because it levels, but because, as a work, it creates a space for this gap: at best it will be a place of encounter, and in any case, one of shared experience.

## **Work Details**

*Frankfurter Schacht*, 2021

Pink onyx (banded calcite), reinforced concrete cylinder, powder-coated (DB 703) aluminum sheet façade, hot-dip galvanized steel door, cast aluminum ring, stainless steel grate, flush mechanism, waste and fresh water tanks  
398 × Ø 214 cm (outside)

MUSEUM<sup>MM</sup> FÜR MODERNE KUNST



