

**Kraftwerk**

## Tresor 31: Ruins of an alternative future

As part of Tresor 31: *Techno, Berlin und die große Freiheit*, the organisers have rebuilt the legendary former club from sand on a 1:1 scale.



Photo: Christopher Bouchard

Thirty-one years ago, Tresor opened on Leipziger Straße 127 in the former vault of the Wertheim bank, a space abandoned following the years of turmoil that followed World War II and the division of Berlin into East and West zones. This was a time when the centre of the city was a wasteland – yet it would become one of the founding locations for a new movement of creativity, freedom and experimentation which have created a new legacy for the city. On Friday 8, that moment of Berlin and techno history will be recreated in an immersive exhibition. *Tresor 31: Techno, Berlin und die große Freiheit* set to run for eight weeks at the former Kraftwerk power plant.

Entering the enormous building, visitors are given headsets to guide them on their journey. The dark inner halls of the building are illuminated with shafts of light from the building's sky light high above, while wind enters the building from the giant six-metre-wide, eight-metre-high doors covered with an enormous, billowing curtain created by artist Joe Namy. If it feels like you are trespassing upon an abandoned space, that is the point. "It should feel like a ruin from an alternative future where the space near Potsdamer Platz was never fully redeveloped," says curator Adriano Rosselli.



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As visitors explore the buildings, paintings leer out from dark corners by an early collaborator, the under-known West Berlin icon David Boyson, while a series of videos shown on the ground floor impressively reconfigure Tresor’s history. Rebecca Salvadori’s *The Sun Has No Shadow* is shown in combination with a specially commissioned piece, *Tresor Tapes*, which was created from their digitally preserved video archives. *APEX*, the video piece from Arthur Jaffa (winner of the Golden Lion at the Venice Biennale in 2019) is backed by a soundtrack from Robin Hood’s *Minus*, originally released in 1994 on Tresor Records.

On the middle level, there’s archive of material from the history of Tresor laid out like archaeological finds – including a number of schemes for projects that were never realised: a Techno tower planned for Potsdamer Platz, Tresor Beijing, or a mock-up of a design that would have seen Tresor relocate to Hallesches Ufer. Rather than nostalgic or academic, the approach is improvisational, experimental and playful, capturing the spirit of *die große Freiheit*.



Photo: Christopher Bouchard



But the climax of the tour comes on the upper +8 floor, where the original Tresor has been reconstructed from sand on a 1:1 scale by the artist Anne de Vries. In this work, titled *Stomping Ground*, audio experience and artistic creation operate in tandem. Ascending the sand-dusted stairs, visitors hear the intermingled sounds of city life: invisible footsteps and the departing U-Bahn give way to the sound of a muffled kick drum emerging from up ahead. Here we reach the main event, a structure which looks like an excavated Roman ruin: this is the former Tresor, recreated painstakingly with the aid of footage taken shortly before it closed down.

“ *You literally feel the building shaking around you differently in every room.* ”

This work captures the ambition of the exhibition. It is like stumbling upon the former club from the perspective of a traveller visiting a future Pompeii, an abandoned city of ghosts – as you sit on a bench or stand next to the recreated cloakroom, voices speak through the headset telling stories that can be informative, funny, digressive, clumsy or irrational.



The original bar, reconstructed in sand. Photo: Christopher Bouchard

Creating this audio landscape was not easy. The headphones use head tracking, meaning visitors will get a different experience depending on where they stand. Odysseas Constantinou and Rowan Ben Jackson, the sound artists tasked with building this sonic environment, worked tirelessly trying to get it right. “We rigged up a recording stage to capture the sound of materials vibrating and spent days playing bass through sand, wood and glass so that we would have the sound of each material vibrating precisely to every track that is played in the club. Then we physically placed each material around the club so you literally feel the building shaking around you differently in every room and every corner.”

31 years ago, when Tresor was founded, the nearby Potsdamer Platz was a wasteland, covered with sand. No one knew what to do with it. But what might have seemed like a disadvantage for the city turned out to be its strength: the new culture which emerged used these empty forgotten places to build something new and vibrant. If sand seems like an appropriate metaphor for this project, it's because it is malleable: things can be made, destroyed, remade. Assessing the history of Tresor, the curators of this exhibition have returned to that original spirit, creating a ruin that is playful rather than melancholy, a testament to the passions that yet survive, stamped upon these lifeless things.

Summer Techno Cold War Kraftwerk tresor



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