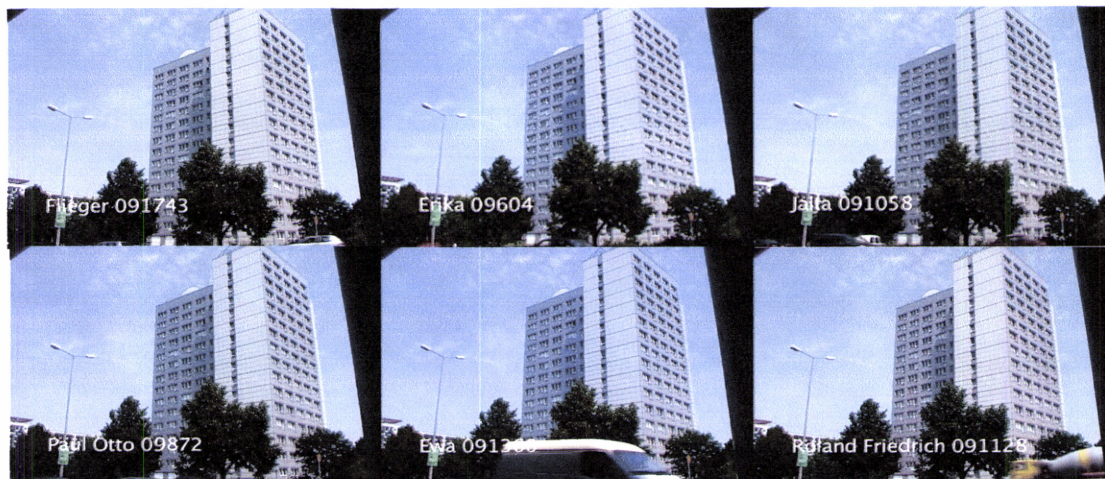


Conspiracy Dwellings – A portrait of a model city



A video installation by Pam Skelton and interventions by C.CRED

“Yes, of course we knew we were being watched, but you didn’t care, you carried on doing what you were doing anyway...” Joachim Heinrich, environmental activist in the former GDR. (Joachim Heinrich In conversation with Pam Skelton, Erfurt, summer, 2003).

Conspiracy Dwellings is a project of visual art and social research that uses a dossier from the State Archives of the German Democratic Republic (DDR) to identify, visualise and map the 500 Stasi conspiracy dwellings that were active in Erfurt a former East German city between 1980 – 1989. Set up to maintain secrecy in an environment of fear, observation and control the ‘home’ proved to be an effective tool for spying on friends colleagues and family. In this project the notion of home is dramatically upset as the domestic becomes yet another vehicle for the invasion of human rights and personal autonomy. Visualising a city as a three dimensional inscription of surveillance Pam Skelton’s extensive video work reveals the blank spaces absorbed by the urban geography, linking the architecture of a city, its buildings, streets and neighbourhoods in an unfolding spiral of control and deception. The last decade of the regime was a period of intense surveillance by the Ministry of State Security, (Stasi) it is estimated that between 1980 and 1989, the Stasi had 91,000 full time employees and 300,000 informants. The statistic implies that around 1 in 50 East Germans worked for or collaborated with the Stasi.

Working closely with local partners in Erfurt and Weimar, *Conspiracy Dwellings* hopes to help facilitate dialogue and generate discussion while informing and addressing some of the issues associated with state control, surveillance, past and present at a time of uncertainty when global terrorism highlights its controversial status and may provoke thought as to how a state in fear of its own population could lead it seems towards increasingly totalising tendencies of social and state control.

Conspiracy Dwellings will open in Erfurt in October 2007 as a public art project using several city locations and will include the work of the artists group C.CRED who have been invited to devise a convivial city walk for small groups of people creating a platform for discussion on Stasi history and contemporary forms of surveillance and will also be available as an audio work.