

## Janet Burchill and Jennifer McCamley

Janet Burchill born Melbourne / Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung Country 1955, lives Melbourne  
Jennifer McCamley born Brisbane / Meanjin 1957, lives Melbourne / Wurundjeri and  
Boonwurrung Country

*March 1992, 1992*

chromogenic print

La Trobe University Art Collection. Purchased 2014. LTU2386

*June 1992, 1992*

chromogenic print

La Trobe University Art Collection. Purchased 2014. LTU2389

*September 1992, 1992*

chromogenic print

La Trobe University Art Collection. Purchased 2014. LTU2385

*November 1992, 1992*

chromogenic print

La Trobe University Art Collection. Purchased 2014. LTU2388

*February 1993, 1993*

chromogenic print

La Trobe University Art Collection. Purchased 2014. LTU2387

The collaborative partnership of Janet Burchill and Jennifer McCamley, established in 1985, engages legacies of modernism and frequently incorporates citation, moving between the boundaries of art, architecture and design. Arriving in 1992 for a year-long residency at the Künstlerhaus Bethanien, Burchill and McCamley initially wanted to consider the historical architectural periods and styles of a recently reunified Berlin. Having previously engaged in a process of remaking a version of Marcel Breuer's Kinderstuhl chair, they became interested in a nearby public site in Kreuzberg through the lens of modernist assemblage sculpture. Photographs taken at this location became a documentary series capturing the shifting public spaces of a newly redetermined neighbourhood.

*Freiland* (1992–93) is a series of nineteen photographs taken in the first two years of Burchill and McCamley's eight-year engagement with this site, a project that resulted in several series across film, slide film and PowerPoint slideshows. *Freiland* translates roughly to 'open land' and at the time designated part of the area left by the newly demolished Berlin Wall, a space in central Kreuzberg that was free for public use. At the boundary of East and West Berlin, this was an area of rapid redevelopment with a diverse population. A local Turkish family had constructed a garden plot and outdoor meeting place with great care from repurposed furniture and materials that had been discarded through the renovations of local apartments. These spaces for gathering had the characteristics of an interior in an exterior setting and held historic references through the integration of 1970s and '80s furniture as permanent fixtures in the outdoor spaces. A key element of the built structures was their *joinage*, the meticulous abutment of materials that separated objects from their original form and function, including the use of concrete to affix the furniture to the ground. Indeed, the construction of these spaces was a transformative process, in both a material and social sense, while also locating the site at a junction between its future and its past.

As photographs, the works are experienced as modestly sized prints that abut their frames. They do not read as a photo essay, as there is a technical imperfection and honesty to the consistent framing of these spaces. They appear to be the B-side photographs from a roll of film, chosen as a subject but not chosen for an album. The structures are noticeably empty, despite their inherent social use. Instead, piles of sand or snow and trailing chicken wire become odd photographic subjects that undermine and activate the perceived vacancy of the structures. If there were to be a subject of the images at all, it may in fact be the joinage of a temporal repurposing. This is seen not only in the furniture, but materially through the repurposed and expired ORWO Russian 35 mm slide film rendered visible in the magenta, green and yellow casts of the images. This is an index not only of a site, but of a time, of exposure to heat, of expiration.

**Jacqui Shelton, 2023**