Among adolescents, who would have been aware of the peculiarity of their city's baroque layout, it was a thing to fold a thumb inside its palm, like a rap gesture, while spreading the other four fingers and simultaneously saying, gangster-style yet regionally inflected: *Fächerstadt* [literally: Fan City, a nickname for Karlsruhe]. – Presumably, the radial road network can be traced back to the star-shaped multiple aisle system that was widely employed at the time to make hunting in forests more effective.

Originally, the German term *Speicher* [broadly: storage] meant a granary for corn and supplies. Initially it denoted a distinct building, but as of the late Middle Ages it could also refer to only a part thereof, especially the upper attic. *Khipu,* or sometimes *Quipu,* is a term for threads knotted according to a specific system that presumable served Inka culture for book-keeping purposes in particular. Hence, *Khipus* store centuries-old information even though – as a not yet fully decrypted script system – they keep it to them-selves to this day.

The allegorical node of the exhibition consists in a printing plate that depicts a cluster of threads from which it is initially hard to tell: is it unwinding texture or tightening tangle? – The corresponding print, which is not on display, is part of a series of drypoints that depict textile entanglements.[1] In light of more than 20,000-years-old hand imprints on cave walls, printing is one of mankind's most primordial imaging techniques. Surely these examples as well as the printing plate can be considered precursors of digital storage media. Though the immateriality of digital data at times contrasts with the massiveness of their storage locations.[2] In this, the construction of big data centres seems to resemble that of warehouses: server cabinets replacing storage racks.
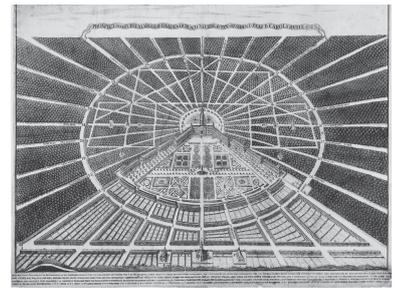
Nadim Vardag takes up such structures and their order. But his inter-vention doesn't simply reactivate what's already been achieved, instead it modulates his repertoire from more than (space-)economic viewpoints, even if the focus may be on the tension between sculpture and utility, which cannot be resolved to either one or the other side alone. So the sculptures will be deployed as furniture in his Viennese apartment afterwards, thus solving that problem many sculptors face: where to put a sculpture if nobody buys it?

The arrangement of boxes[3] exhibited with their rears facing front is conveyed on the one hand by the horizontal and vertical structures at the cut edges and on the other hand by the direction of the grain. But then they are perceptible first and foremost as accumulated volumes, which poses the question whether we are to conceive of the exhibition less as a presentation of individual objects but rather as an interference with the architecture. – The wooden bodies modify the layout, block visual axes, define new paths, create rooms within the room and change its atmosphere.
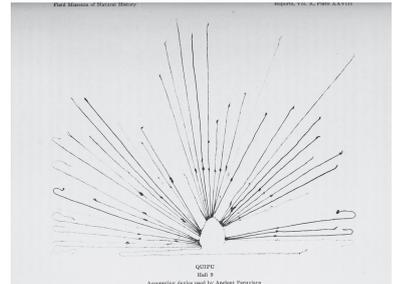
And yet, as with the hermetic architecture of logistics and data centres as well as power plants – whose outer infrastructure we are used to seeing without knowing their interior – or with batteries: ultimately our view inside is blocked here as well.

Text: Thomas Hesse
Translation: Gerrit Haas

A view of the city in 1721 by Heinrich Schwarz, Municipal Archive Karlsruhe.

Graphical representation of a *Khipu*, Field Museum Chicago.

1   On prolonged contemplation the innocuous picture of a dynamic structure may yield to the discomfort of associating moving creatures, as threads turn into roundworms.
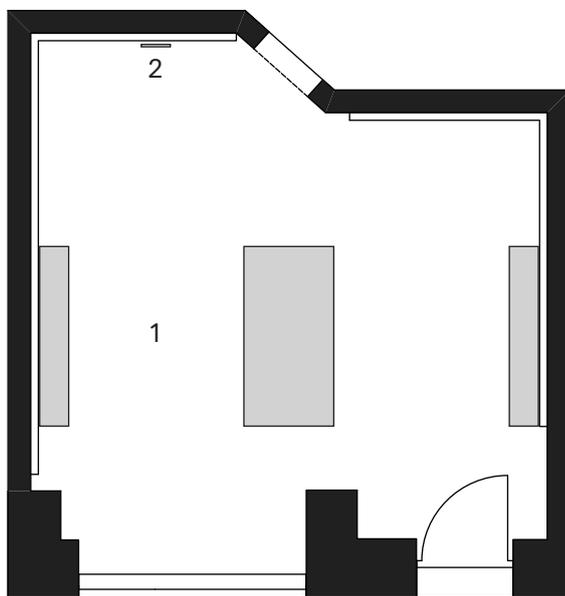
2   One cloud storage service promises to secure its customer's sensible data in a bunker beneath the Swiss alps. Some German-speaking companies advertise their services on the internet using the English term "cloud storage". Especially the technical terms go to show that English employs different terms for what in German is always *Speicher*: the German verb *speichern* corresponds to the English "to save". The German designation *Arbeitsspeicher* [literally: working storage] corresponds to what English usually employs in its short form "memory" (i.e. for RAM: random access memory).

3   In Austria the German word *Kasten* [box] is used for cupboards.

Nadim Vardag
Speicher

July 11th – August 1st 2021

1
Untitled
2021
Beech plywood
240 × 240 × 40 cm,
240 × 240 × 120 cm,
240 × 240 × 40 cm

2
Untitled
2021
Drypoint printing plate,
metal frame
43 × 33 × 4,5 cm