Born in Zwickau in the 1980s, Henrike Naumann witnessed the shift between the socialist German Democratic Republic (GDR) and its amalgamation with the Federal Republic of Germany as a child and young adult.

The insights and experiences arising from this form a key point of departure for her artistic work, and connected with this, her discursive, research-based practice. In previous works, for example, she has investigated forms of radicalisation in connection with the history of right-wing extremist ideologies and – in respect to her own generation – with the increasing return and acceptance of attitudes stemming from the extreme right in politics and society today.

For her project in Galerie im Turm, Naumann takes the history of the space itself as a starting-point to investigate the legacy of her grandfather, Karl Heinz Jakob (1929, †1997, Zwickau). The painter from Saxony was a member of the guild of artists of the GDR, and was also active in other socialist states through organised study trips. His works were shown in Dresden, Karl-Marx-Stadt (Chemnitz), Zwickau, Budapest, Bucharest, Moscow, Rabat, Riga, Havana, and many other cities.

Galerie im Turm was established in 1965 as the exhibition space of the GDR’s guild of artists, before being integrated into the local administration as a communal gallery in 1990. Located in the ground floor of Frankfurter Tor’s North Tower, the socialist classicist architecture of galerie im turm speaks volumes of its own history. Through this exhibition, which includes the works of Jakob – transmitted through the lens of Naumann’s contemporary position – socialist realist paintings are again to be exhibited in the space.

Henrike Naumann creates expansive installations out of items of furniture, accessories, and interior fittings in the Memphis style, which flooded East German markets at the beginning of the 1990s – largely in the form of cheap imitations. Through this, the artist showcases a particular aesthetic of the everyday that characterised lounge rooms of the newly federated states of Germany, separating that which preceded reunification from that which followed it along stylistic lines. In dialogue with the paintings of her grandfather, Naumann generates a constellation that, if not unfeasible, is certainly anachronistic, falling between social study and family constellation.

DDR Noir, 2018
Mixed media installation (consisting of various furniture, various props and paintings by Karl Heinz Jakob, 1929, †1997, Zwickau)
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