
Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

An EYE on BERLIN

Rick Meghiddo · Sunday, February 19th, 2023

An EYE on BERLIN illustrates contemporary architecture and art examples within a consciousness of the city's history between 1933 and 1989. It includes the Reichstag dome, the Jewish Museum, and the Sony Center. It also illustrates aspects of the city's past and present and a visit to the Hamburger Bahnhof art museum and the German Historical Museum.



An EYE on BERLIN Poster

A City in Flux

Thirty years after the fall of the Wall, Berlin still struggles with its urban form. It is a city in flux, complicated, with an urban fabric that seems to resist all attempts to reorder it, a reminder of the more messy, contradictory, and organic qualities that all cities should have. It is charming, full of

life, not for its beauty or its wealth, but because of its vitality.

The city has become a mecca for artists, a place of attraction to architects and filmmakers, internationally recognized as one of the hottest cities of the 21st century. With an atmosphere buzzing with creative energy, no serious member of the contemporary art world can stay away from Berlin for long. It's become an essential stop on the art circuit, acting as a junction between east and west.

Buildings in Berlin tend to be manifestos, propaganda, memorials, battlefields. The city as a whole is a disjointed urbanization in search of identity. Some areas seemed too large, or too flat, too insipid box-like structures produced as merchandize.

ARCHITECTURE



View of Berlin from the Reichstag



The Reichstag



The Reichstag



Berlin Philharmonic – Hans Scharoun



Sony Center – Helmut Jahn



German Historical Museum – I.M. Pei



Jewish Museum – Daniel Libeskind



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Jewish Museum – Daniel Libeskind

The Reichstag Dome: The People Above the Government

The Reichstag is the dominant component of a democratic of troika, together with the Chancellery and the Paul Löbe parliamentary building. The dome sits on top of the Bundestag, the German parliament, and it symbolizes that the people are above the government. A mirrored cone in the center of the dome directs sunlight into the building. A large sun shield tracks the movement of the sun electronically and allows light, carefully filtered, to wash down into the chamber. The dome can be climbed by a vertiginous double-helix made of two lightweight steel ramps, which inspired Foster for his design of London's City Hall.

Berlin Philharmonic

Berlin Philharmonic, Hans Scharoun's masterpiece, remains a reminder of great post-WW II architecture. Completed in 1963, it preceded Frank Gehry's Disney Hall by forty years.

It is an embodiment of organic architecture principles, in which the buildings are designed from within. The sequences of spaces leading to the hall play with tension and release. Low, small entrance areas lead to a vast, multi-layered foyer.

The main hall presents a vineyard-style arrangement of the stage and audience, with terraces rising around a central orchestral platform. This feature led to the tent-like design of the hall's ceiling, with a higher center draping down towards the edges.

The Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe

Designed by architect Peter Eisenman, the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe is a vast field of concrete slabs in the historic heart of Berlin, which before the Nazis came to power, had the largest Jewish population in Germany. Paradoxically, the monument is a few hundred yards from the site of Hitler's bunker.

No other country had erected a monument to "the biggest crime in its history" in the middle of its capital. Covered with 2,711 concrete slabs or stelae, arranged in a grid pattern on a sloping field,

the project was designed to produce an uneasy, confusing atmosphere. The whole memorial aims to represent a supposedly ordered system that has lost touch with human reason.

The Jewish Museum

The Jewish Museum in Berlin is the masterwork of the Polish-born musician-turned-architect Daniel Libeskind. The zinc-clad structure is designed to create a sense of disorientation, interspersed with feelings of claustrophobia and panic. Corridors tilt, cross, and funnel to nothingness. The world outside is glimpsed only occasionally through slit windows.

Libeskind's building has no entrances or exits of its own. There are promises of doors, but they turn out to be dead ends. The floors slope. The concrete walls oppress. You are not in charge of your own destiny.

The Garden of Exile denies us the relaxation we expect of a garden. It is a plantation of concrete columns from which Russian olive trees cascade. Nothing is as it should be here. The ground won't stay still, and the sky itself appears displaced. People wander this disconcerting garden a long time, uneasy and reflective.

Sony Center and Potsdamer Platz

The Sony Center, designed by Helmut Jahn and Peter Walker as landscape architect, is one of the most impressive public spaces in Berlin. It is one of the few buildings in the area which offers a public plaza which is always lively and happening. Its huge atrium covered by an umbrella-shaped roof.

Potsdamer Platz, an important public square and traffic intersection in the center of Berlin, is the result of extensive competitions, designs, and planning. Nineteen of the buildings in the area were conceived and designed by an international team of architects headed by Renzo Piano.

Renzo Piano's master plan for the area called for typical Berlin blocks courtyard buildings with a maximum height of 9 stories. British architect Richard Rogers designed a project on commission from Daimler Chrysler. It contains offices in the first two blocks and residential in the last block. Retail functions occupy on the ground and lower floors. Rogers reinterpreted the constraints and designed courtyard buildings with an eroded corner. This would open up the courtyard, allowing sunlight to reach in and air to circulate through.

German Historical Museum Extension Hall

Chinese-born, U.S.-based architect I. M. Pei designed a small extension to the German Historical Museum. The four floors of the Exhibition Hall are devoted to the Museum's temporary exhibitions. The new building had to be connected with the baroque architecture of the German Historical Museum.

D.Z. Bank

The DZ Bank Building is a mixed-use building comprised of a commercial component, housing the Berlin headquarters of DZ Bank and a residential component consisting of 39 apartments.

A glass canopy covers the main entrance to the building from Pariser Platz. A high-volume foyer

immediately inside the main entry offers a view into the building's large interior atrium, which features a curving glass ceiling and a curving glass floor. Office spaces are organized around the atrium, and are oriented inward to take advantage of the natural light that floods through the glass ceiling.

The building's primary conference hall is located within a highly sculptural shell in the center of the glass floor of the atrium. Clad in stainless steel on the exterior and wood on the interior, the conference room is the physical and spiritual heart of the project.

ART

Berlin is home to hundreds of galleries and art museums that boast unparalleled collections. Cultural projects are generously funded and supported by many large and powerful institutions in the city. The ever-so-avant-garde contemporary art scene can flourish in this environment.

The documentary includes the [Hamburger Bahnhof Museum](#), an original railway station from the mid-19th century, turned into an art museum in 1996; the [Berlische Galerie](#) and the [König Galerie](#); and the extraordinary and revealing [German Historical Museum](#).



People, by Inges Idee



Light Art



With a Kienholtz sculpture



Brezhnev and Honecker Kiss

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