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an architectural brief
submitted by

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A Short History of Berlin.

1237 The medieval merchant settlement of Colln on the left bank of the Spree was first mentioned in documents. In 1244, the sister city of Berlin was established across the river.

1307 Consolidation of the twin cities Colln-Berlin.

1709 Royal Prussian Residence.

1740 Ascension to the throne of "Frederick the Great". Berlin gains status as a European capital.

1871 Capital city of the German Reich.

1918 November Revolution, proclamation of the Republic (Nov. 11).

1920 Incorporation of the unified community of "Greater Berlin", with 20 administrative districts.

1933 Ascension to power by the National Socialists.

1936 XI Olympic Summer Games

1938 Nov. 9: Night of the Reichs-pogrom.

1945 Berlin is divided and conrtolled by four powers

1948 The Soviets terminate cooperation with the three Western occuption forces, starting the blockade which lasts 11 months. Political split between West and East Berlin.

1953 June 17: Nationwide uprising in East Berlin and the GDR.

1961 Forced seperation of the city through the construction of the Berlin Wall (Aug. 13).

1971 The Four Powers sign the Quadripartite Agreement.

1987 Separate 750th anniversary celebrations in both halves of the city.

1989 Nov. 9: fall of the Berlin Wall; transition in the GDR.

1990 Oct. 3: Day of Unification and first all-German meeting of elected representatives since 1933 in the Reichstag. Election of the first unified Berlin parliament in over 40 years.

Berlin with the Wall.

"In Berlin, the prevailing winds are from the west. Consequently a traveler coming in by plane has plenty of time to observe the city from above. In order to land against the wind, a plane from the west must cross the city and the wall dividing it three times: initially heading east, the plane enters West Berlin airspace, banks left in a wide arc across the eastern part of the city, and then, coming back from the east, takes the barrier a third time on the approach to Tegel landing strip. Seen from the air, the city appears perfectly homogeneous. Nothing suggests to the stranger that he is nearing a region where two political continents collide.

The overriding impression is of a linear order, one which derives from the rectangle and rules out any bending. In the center of the city, the apartment buildings are massed like fortresses. For the most part they are built in squares enclosing an inner courtyard, each with a chestnut tree in the middle. When the top of one of these chestnuts begins to move gently, residents can assume that a force six to eight gale is sweeping along the streets outside. Berliners commonly call these apartment houses apartment barracks, an expression which accurately conveys the architects' inspiration. And from above, their jagged chimneys awaken memories of the broken glass cemented into backyard walls for protection against the neighbors' cats and children.

The new houses on the edge of the city do not seem

to be built from the bottom up. They resemble cement blocks dropped from an American or Soviet military helicopter; even as the plane begins its descent, the stranger still can't distinguish the two parts of the city. While the Eastern countryside was recognizable by the uniform color of the crops and the absence of artificial boundaries between fields, the cityscape offers hardly any guide to political affiliation. At most, the duplication of public landmarks-television tower, convention hall, zoo, city hall, and sports stadium-prefigures a city in which the same taste has brought forth the same things twice.

Among all these rectangles, the wall in its fantastic zigzag course seems to be the figment of some anarchic imagination. Lit up in the afternoon by the setting sun and lavishly illuminated by floodlights after dark, the wall seems more a civic monument than a border.

On a clear day the traveler can watch the plane's shadow skimming back and forth across the city. He can track the plane closing in on its shadow until it touches down right on top of it. Only when he disembarks does he notice that in this city, the recovered shadow signifies a loss. After the fact, he realizes that only the plane's shadow was free to move between the two parts of the city; and suddenly the plane seems to him a vehicle like those Einstein dreamed of, from which laughably young and unsuspecting travelers emerge to tour a city where, since yesterday, a thousand years have passed".

from <u>The Wall Jumper,</u> by Peter Schneider.

Berlin without the Wall.

Berlin. A fascinating, vibrant city, where one in ten residents today is a foreigner. For a traveller, its feeling is truely unique and inviting; the city seems to supercede any sense of German nationalism, as if to overshadow its past.

Berlin displays contrast, vulgarity, energy and a raw beauty that speaks for the vibrant past of a city that has at numerous times, in both a positive and negative light, held the eyes of the world.

Anything seems possible in Berlin. This is a city that celebrates the now and is unafraid at looking to the future with courage and excitement.

Berlin's cityscape is dense and low; with many diverse districts, in character and architectural language. The city is dotted with green parks and forests; the Spree river dashing through.

The reunification of East and West Berlin has created the opportunity to heal the wounds of thirty years of political, social and physical seperation. 'Monuments to defeat' literally take form in the gaps torn in the once dense urban fabric, in the blank concrete facades of 'functionalist container architecture', and in the painful scar of the Wall zone. Berlin is in the process of transformation and can now reemerge as a great 'European' metropolis. As Kenneth Powell puts it, "Berlin is Europe's ultimate city of the future - if only because so much of its past is too painful to contemplate-..."(A.D., p.7).

With the excitement of rebuilding a unified Berlin, comes the problems of joining two drastically different societies. The Berlin wall was built as the physical force behind this

division in thought and governmental idealologies. In 1989 the will of the people, culturally and linguistically bound, brought the wall down...

hardly a year later, a frustrated Berliner is saying, 'give me my wall back'.

"Adolf Hitler imagined a Berlin 'built on such a scale that St. Peter's and its Square will seem like toys in comparison'. 'Nothing', declared Hitler, 'will be too good for the beautification of Berlin'. His dream ended in 1945, when Berlin became a modern Carthage. Some argued that the city should be left in this state: a monument to defeat. But Berlin survived the Allied bombs and nearly half a century of division; and now, new architectural visions are dreamt"

Kenneth Powell, (A.D., p.7).

Urban Context.

There currently exists a meandering wasteland on both sides of the Berlin Wall zone. This inner-city border cuts through significant districts at the heart of Berlin; creating two city centers and disrupting the urban network of this area of the city. With the Wall no longer a physical entity, the two halves of Berlin need to be rewoven based on a complex historical development, "with its living axes, sequences of squares and significant places"(A.D., p.13).

The opportunity now exists to rearrange the historical, spiritual, and physical center of Berlin; the Stadtmitte. As near the heart of Berlin as one can get, the Brandenburg Gate stands today in isolation, at once a symbol for the division and for the unification of East and West Berlin. It was here that tourists came to peer over the Berlin wall at the East and it was here that Germans came to celebrate the fall of Germany's division. The Brandenburg Gate marks where the stately Unter den Linden meets the Strasse des 17. Juni, the promonade of the Tiergarten. The severing of this symbolic axis through the city is now the focus of inner-city planning and architectural competitions.

A historical reconstruction of the Pariser Platz and the significant structures along the Unter den Linden has been recommended. The government of Germany has proposed that this entire area be used for parliamentary and associated buildings that will be needed for the capital being moved from Bonn; once again establishing this area as the political power center of a unified Germany.

The Leipziger Platz, at one time the most vibrant intersection of Berlin, currently stands as a sandy 'no-man's-land'. This land has been purchased by Daimler-Benz and will be rebuilt based on a recent architectural competition.

It will take us longer to tear down the Wall in our heads than any wrecking company will need for the Wall we can see.

Peter Schneider, from The Wall Jumper.

Urban Design Concept.

As it currently stands, the presumed fate of the wall zone has been realized. The wall has been physically erased and thus is denying the city that this part of its history ever existed (A.D., p. 31).

As Berlin grows to become once again a major European capital and thus world-wide power center, this area that historically signifies militarism and governmental control is being devoured by the forces that once led to its rise and then its destruction.

This important center of Berlin and of Germany should not again be subject to and dominated by these forces. The core of the Stadtmitte district should physically and symbolically embody freedom. It should speak of the people and their relationship to the city.

The deteriorated remnant of the Wall zone should become just this place; linking the public spaces of the Pariser Platz and Leipziger Platz. A peaceful pedestrian street and park can mark this link and form a transition from the Tiergarten to the urban complexity of the city.

The dismemberment of the Berlin Wall served an important purpose. I think parts of it should remain as a significant artifact to the past and to the future Berlin. The Berlin Wall as an artist, activist and citizen palatte performed a valuable role in making life with the Wall humourous and liveable. The Wall can become a monument and artwork in progress.

Reflections of the Wall and its political, social and historical implications will be manifested in spaces and elements that puncuate its linear datum. I want to express my goals for this project in creating a 'language' of meaningful places.

Goals.

My goals in realizing this urban place are:

1. To create an element that reconnects the political, social and physical division of East and West Berlin.

2. To realize historical and political realities that have shaped this city.

3. To create a place for people and humane interaction.

4. To capture the spirit of Berlin and its social ethos.

5. To give current meaning to a lost zone.

"As a work of art, architecture concretizes higher objects or 'values'. It gives visual expression to ideas which *mean* something to man because they 'order' reality".

Christian Norberg-Schultz.

Spaces and Elements.

the wall.
as an artifact.
as a artwork in progress.
a monument.
as a orientating focal point.

the wall zone.
a place for people.
a park.
a pedestrian street.
a sacred path.
a connection of public places.

the building edges.
a german history musuem.
a wall musuem.
a changing exhibition.
rituals of a musuem.
a reflection of the city, it's people, it's past.

a gathering place.
an outdoor shelter.
political information.
active density.

Notes.

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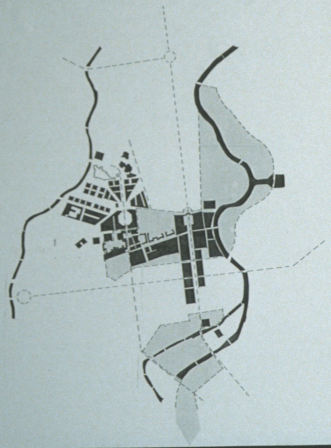
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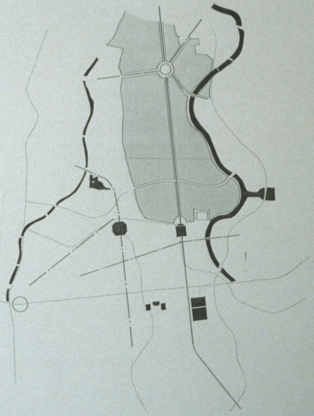






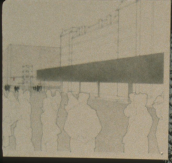




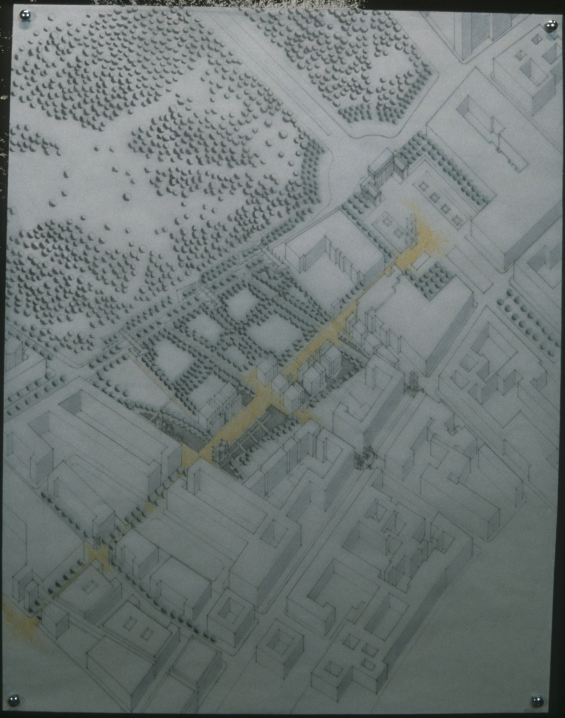



Division
Freedom

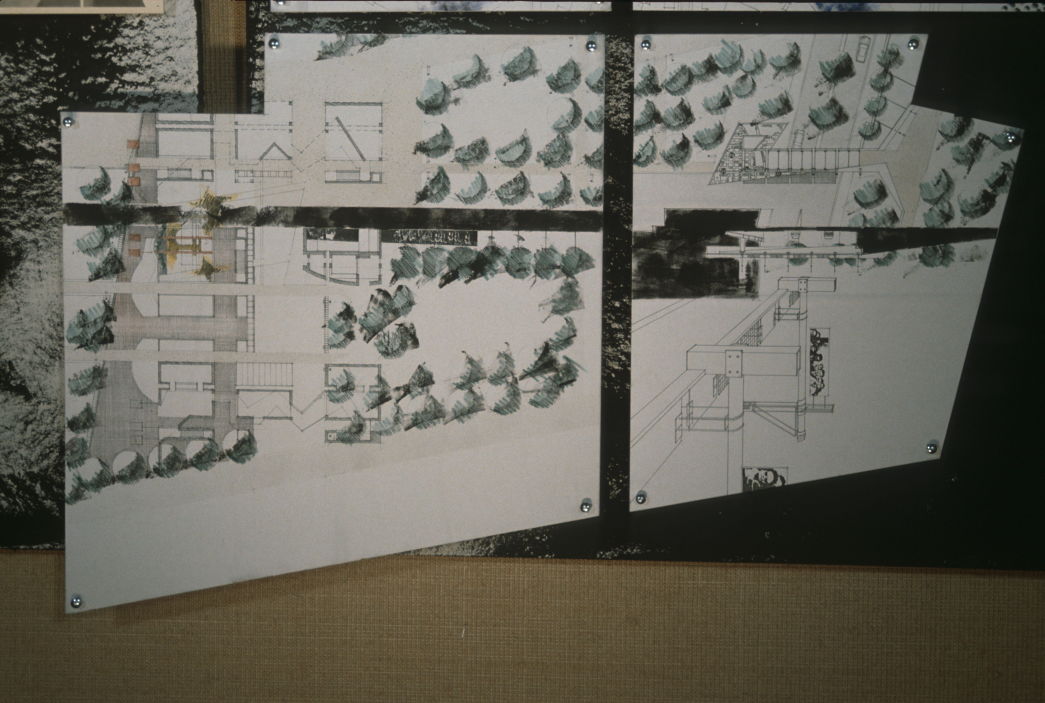


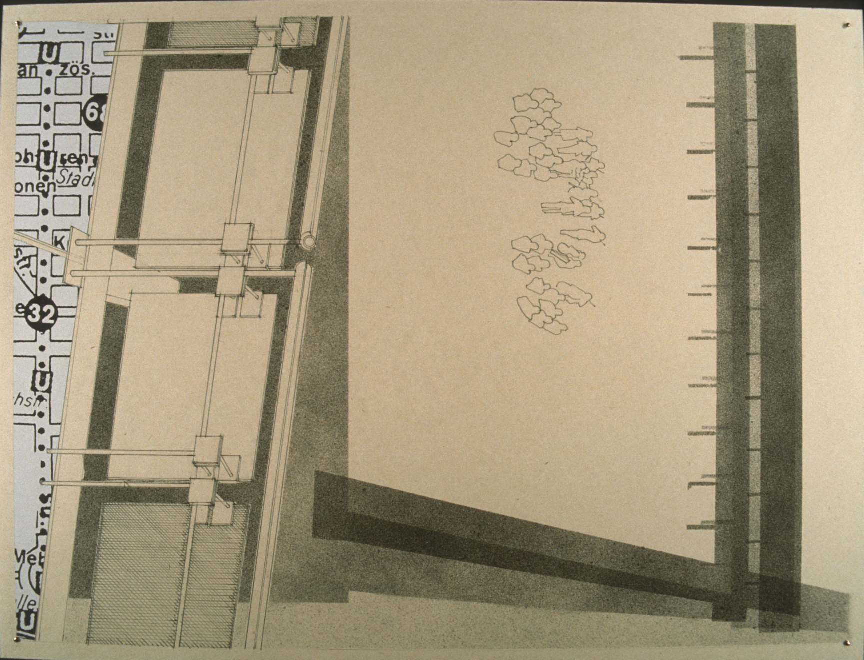








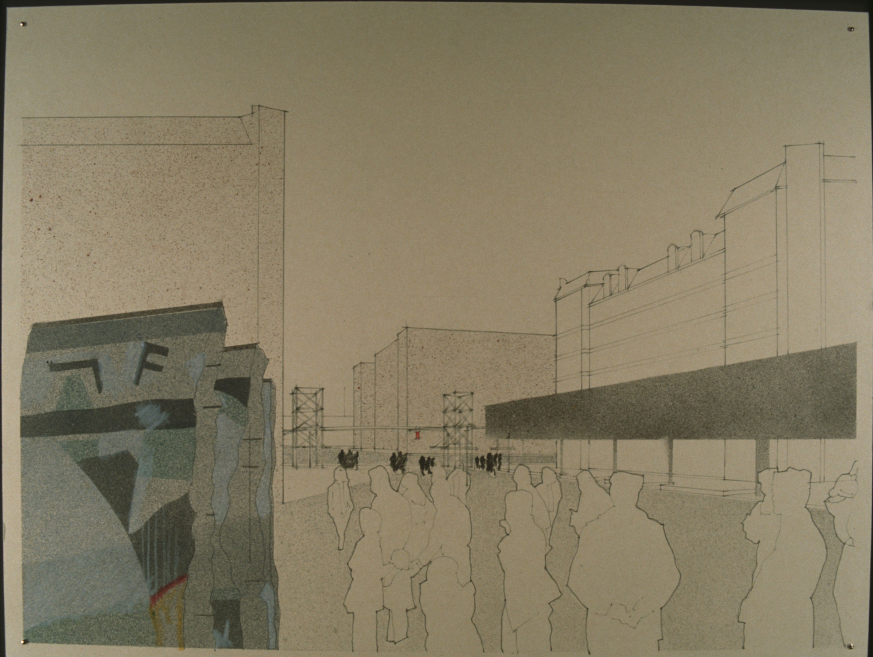



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