



Leipziger Straße towards the east. Photo: Hendrik Blaukat, 2023

PREFACE

Leipziger Straße runs right through the middle of Berlin, at first glance dominated by traffic and large residential buildings. But if we look more closely, we see a vital street with an exciting history shaped by its residents and various figures active in art and culture. In the middle of this area, three site-specific artistic works were installed to explore socially-relevant questions and the relationship between art, culture, and urban production.

After the projects KISR-Kunst im Stadtraum am Hansaplatz (2018–19) and KISR-Kunst im Stadtraum an der Karl-Marx-Allee (2020–21), KISR-Kunst im Stadtraum an der Leipziger Straße (2023–25) was the next project to be implemented. The program Kunst im Stadtraum thus looked at an additional area of Berlin-Mitte, inspired by the previous projects. Like the other areas treated, Leipziger Straße was decisively influenced by reconstruction after the Second World War and built in the spirit of social visions of the future.

Here in particular, temporary art in urban space is an opportunity to present something new and unusual, changing everyday urban space and thus unsettling fixed preconceptions. The three works that were created in the framework of *KISR–Kunst im Stadtraum an der Leipziger Straße* make the turbulent history of the street palpable, also linking it to current social debates and provoking exchange and reflection. I am pleased that *KISR–Kunst im Stadtraum an der Leipziger Straße* was able to promote social dialogue between artists, residents, and other local actors and to emphasize the relevance of temporary art in urban space.

Stefanie Remlinger District Mayor, Berlin-Mitte

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↑ Leipziger Straße 43-44 → Leipziger Straße 55 Photos: Hendrik Blaukat, 2023



RHYTHMS IN URBAN SPACE: TEMPORARY INTERVENTIONS AND SITE SPECIFICITY

Christoph Chwatal and Ludovica Tomarchio

Temporary artistic interventions in urban space mark, fragment, and amplify. They intervene in existing spatial and social orders, exposing concealed conflicts or disturbing standard procedures. We use the term intervention to describe artistic, aesthetic, or critical acts and practices that challenge power relations. This process is simultaneously challenging and critical as well as "healing" or therapeutic. The focus is not on smoothing over conflicts, but their accentuation: fissures are made visible and generated.

We understand the three site-specific interventions that are part of Kunst im Stadtraum Leipziger Straße not as a solution to a problem, but as aesthetic-political amplifications of what is suppressed in urban planning. While the program refers to art as a disciplinary field, interventionist, experimentally challenging practices are gaining importance in wider debates about architecture and urban planning.

Space is not just a physical given, but it is also socially constructed and relational. In the sociological theory of space, space is considered a relational arrangement created by placing human beings and objects and their linkage in processes of perception, imagination, and memory. Temporary interventions seek to create new relations and disrupt existing circumstances. We thus ask whether it is not precisely temporal complexity and the encounter between various rhythms and cycles of artistic-aesthetic practice that could disrupt dominant logics of urban planning as well as conventional notions of art in public space. In the following, we approach this question based on the concept of relational space and sociologist Henri Lefebvre's rhythmanalysis.

Annette Maechtel has explored how temporary interventions in the 1990s served as a political apparatus for questioning existing power relations within processes or urban development policymaking. In recent decades, however, conditions have shifted fundamentally: the temporary today appears less as a counterhegemonic practice, but increasing as a component of a neoliberal urban policy

that relies on aesthetic strategies of beautification, on the creative economy and forms of "test-bed urbanism." Not everything temporary disrupts: some temporary gestures smooth things over. It is all the more important to us to interrogate temporary artistic practices anew. What makes them visible? What rhythms do they interrupt and which do they continue?

The temporary is thus not to be conceived as affirmative, but as an ambivalent moment. We are thus interested in temporary interruptions of dominant rhythms and cycles, for example in the projects on Leipziger Straße. In this way, the tense relationship between amplification and beautification or improvement moves into focus. Against this backdrop, we ask to what extent artistic interventions respond reflectively or resistantly-aggressively to their respective sites.

EURHYTHMIA AND ARRHYTHMIA

When temporary interventions are understood as both diagnostic and at the same time disruptive acts within temporal structures in space, Henri Lefebvre's four-part rhythmanalysis—which can only be sketched roughly here—offers a helpful theoretical framework. For Lefebvre, space is not a fixed arrangement, but filled with different, in part competing rhythms, shaped by labor time, cycles of consumption, or natural processes such as the times of day or the course of the year. In Lefebvre's understanding, rhythm is a central element of lived spatiality: "Everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is rhythm." As culturally shaped and institutionally regulated structures, these rhythms have a deep effect on everyday life: they structure work, traffic, consumption, and even influence perception and behavior. As a vehicle of reproduction, they inscribe norms and hierarchies in the perception and use of space.

Urban development plans frequently follow the logic of linear rhythms: they structure spaces with plannable repetitions and standardized procedures. The design of a new public space creates new paths, routines, and temporal structures. Lefebvre contrasts such linear procedures with cyclical rhythms: for example the four seasons, the blossoming of plants, or atmospheric changes like light and smell. In that temporary interventions interfere with linear and cyclical rhythms, they destabilize spatiotemporal orders. They generate fissures, shifts, or overlaps and introduce microrhythms that adapt, contradict, or create an entirely new order.

Spatial interventions thus have temporal consequences. Temporary artistic interventions do not necessarily follow cyclical rhythms, but often take up the idea of a dynamic, processual space. In its micro-rhythms, new relations emerge that unsettle existing orders, displace or can reassemble them.

With his more comprehensive concept of rhythmanalysis, Lefebvre distinguishes between two basic forms of rhythm: eurhythmia, understood as the ensemble of harmonic procedures, and arrhythmia, the collision of contradictory rhythms that are not coordinated with one another. Lefebvre describes arrhythmia as the moment in which "rhythms break apart, alter and bypass synchronization." It reveals the hidden contradictions of a space: temporal orders no longer fit with one another, but overlap, separate, or wind up in conflict with one another. Temporary interventions can introduce such dissonant micro-rhythms. They interrupt the dominant tempo, generate fissures and reveal the mechanisms through which the power relations in urban space are created and maintained.

Rhythm here appears not only as a temporal structure, but as a tool of social order and discipline. Arrythmia is in this context an aesthetic and political instrument. It shifts attention and opens a possibility for understanding the city as a space of contradictions and negotiations. The amplification of arrythmia does not mean to continue to displace marginalized groups. On the contrary, their existence is emphasized, made audible and publicly addressed.

AMPLIFICATION

Urban spaces are often structured by mechanisms of exclusion that push certain groups and conflicts out of sight. Temporary interventions can interrupt this concealment. Unlike beautification, that smooths over urban spaces aesthetically and hides social tensions, amplification relies on consciously revealing spatial-social lines of conflict.

The work *rübermachen* by the artist collective msk7 is installed in a pedestrian underpass, a place that due to its functionality and design neglect is hardly perceived as accommodating. The defective lighting, a half-burned mattress, and traces of its improvised use as a public toilet reveal a social and spatial exclusion that leaves its mark on the materiality of the location. With the title *rübermachen*, the work takes up references to the GDR: the expression was used

at the time to refer to the (illegal) escape of East Germans to West Germany. Loudspeakers play audio snippets from GDR radio shows, political slogans such as "Vorwärts immer, rückwärts nimmer!" (Always forward, never backward!) and noises like dripping water and fast steps. The acoustic structure does not follow a linear narrative, but layers unlinked fragmentary sound tracks. In this way, a dissonant auditive rhythm emerges that is not synchronized, but takes place intentionally asynchronously. By way of the targeted amplification of the already palpable sense of discomfort, the auditive elements direct our gaze at the atmospheric and historic layerings of the location. The intervention thus stresses conflictual layers of memory and processes of urban exclusion.

rübermachen shows in an exemplary fashion how amplifications can work as an artistic strategy not to smooth over conflicts, but to make them audible. The work can be read as an attempt to reveal spatial, temporary, and political fissures. In this context, amplification means highlighting what is otherwise blocked out in the urban structure: social tensions, neglected locations, and contradictory memories. The arrhythmia that results is not a side effect, but fulfills a diagnostic function. It makes fissures in the urban space visible (and audible) and shows how normative orders become unstable. With their moment of disruption, they point to those conflicts and omissions that are often naturalized in everyday perception.

DISRUPTION

Kandis Friesen's *Diadéo trésor*, installed at Marion-Gräfin-Dönhoff-Platz, responds to an environment of reconstructed monuments and standard urban landscaping. Directly neighboring the neo-classicist Spittelkolonnade, which was rebuilt by the GDR government as a monument to "worker and peasant power," the targeted fragment form of the work causes a fissure to emerge. The installation relies on an anti-monumental formal language to contrast the spatiotemporal order that targets duration, clarity, and state representation.

The installation can be found on a marginal spot of lawn accessible by stepping over a low park fence. Its central element is an architectural fragment of the former Kaufhaus Wertheim on Leipziger Platz, a women's head with a laurel wreath that refers to forms from Greco-Roman antiquity. The original was found in the ruins in 1956 and can be seen today at Stadtmuseum Berlin. In the

installation, it appears as a replica made using autoclaved aerated concrete. The sculpture is complemented by a semicircular planting with laurel plants. Together, they form a circular arrangement on the park surface. The autoclaved aerated concrete, potted plants, and visible traces of use grant the work a materiality that recalls provisional construction sites, transitional states, and mobile structures in urban space.

Diadéo trésor refuses the logic of fixation and museum conservation. Instead of a fixed narrative, a space of overlap emerges in which repressed, interwoven stories that are difficult to communicate exist alongside one another. These include: the colonialism of the German Empire, the Nazi period and the confiscation of Jewish property, the division of Berlin, the techno culture of the 1990s, and recent processes of urban displacement and privatization. The classical formal language of the woman's head refers to a colonial repertoire of images that was formative of architecture in the Wilhelmine period, the late nineteenth and first decade of the twentieth century; the origins of the fragment from confiscated Jewish property marks a void in the public memory. The proximity to GDR memorial architecture in turn poses the question of how political systems appropriate past forms to stabilize their own narratives.

The temporary installation is accompanied by an education and outreach program with site-specific sound works and participatory walking tour formats. In this sense, the work can be seen in the tradition of the new genre public art as described by Suzanne Lacy in the 1990s: an artistic practice in public space characterized not so much by its permanence and object presence, but rather by its processuality, social involvement, and context sensibility. Diadéo trésor stands not for representation, but for making visible of temporally and historically mediated relations. The auxiliary program is here not a supplement, but a constitutive component of the work. As a temporary, anti-monumental intervention, Diadéo trésor inscribes a fragmented rhythm into Marion-Gräfin-Dönhoff-Platz, an alternative temporal structure that makes naturalized rhythms visible and breaks through them.

CYCLICITY

Gertraudenhain is a circular space with a diameter of 14 meters framed by a simple wooden fence. It is located on a triangular spot of green near the Spree Canal, near Neue Gertraudenbrücke and

slightly set off from Leipziger Straße. The intervention by the artist Christof Zwiener consists of a densely planted, until now only hip-high mini-forest planned using the Miyawaki method, an ecological concept that is internationally known as the "tiny forest." Even if the design seamless corresponds to this principle, *Gertraudenhain* is intended as an artistic intervention. In contrast to urban practices that rely on their event character and temporality, the project moves the focus to cyclical temporalities such as growth processes and seasonal changes.

In *rübermachen* a dissonant "rhythm" was amplified and made audible, a form of arrythmia with a diagnostic quality. *Gertraudenhain* in contrast opens a different state that Henri Fefebvre calls eurythmia: a moment in which various rhythms coincide in the same place and time without dominating or suppressing one another. Seen in this perspective, the project brings new rhythms to the urban space: those of plants, insects, people, and care routines. These overlie existing time frames and open temporarily expanded webs of relationship in urban space.

Gertraudenhain does not develop immediately, but over time. At the center is not a rapid transformation, but a long-term engagement for responsibility, care, and collective participation. This temporary project could thus be planned for the longer term, assuming it is locally anchored and politically supported. Via cyclical rhythms like growth processes, seasonal care, and collective repetition, the intervention establishes an alternative temporal structure in the city space, in which ecological concerns, social practices, and citizen participation are linked to one another. The project thus refers efficiency, and control. The artistic aspect perhaps lies precisely in the thematization of the relationship of tension between unique initiative and enduring responsibility: it sketches the possible transition from temporary gesture to institutionalized care.

REFLECTION

The interventions *rübermachen*, *Diadéo trésor*, and *Gertraudenhain* exhibit various strategies of temporary artistic interventions in urban space that each develop a diagnostic as well as interventive dimension. The three interventions, however, differ not only in aesthetic form, but especially in their temporal-spatial approaches: *rübermachen* amplifies existing social and historical tensions and generates an immediate disruption. *Diadéo trésor* works with

an open, fragmentary, and anti-monumental form to undermine selective politics of memory. *Gertraudenhain*, in contrast, relies on processual, community-borne transformation, that can develop via cyclical rhythms and with long-term care over the years.

Together, the three projects show that temporary artistic interventions not only activate or aesthetically transform spaces, but can mark conflicts, unsettle memories, and can open new temporalties of urban coexistence. Using a heterogeneous field of practices, they create alternative rhythms, mark tensions, and shift responsibilities. Their critical potential lies not in being monumental or enduring, but in their fragmentary, cyclical, and processual quality: in practices that act diagnostically, challengingly, collaboratively, situatedly, temporary, cyclically, and adaptively. Its creative potential consists in opening rhythmic dimensions that through new relations enable states of eurhythmia by way of moments of arrythmia.

The interventions are site-specific. In the framework of Kunst im Stadtraum, the artists were invited to suggest locations along Leipziger Straße that they chose for their spatial, social, or historical qualities. The concrete locations were not set beforehand. The interventions are responsive, for they enter into a dialogue with the respective sites. We understood this dialogue in our text primarily as a conversation between different rhythms. It could be said that it is like a dinner party with rhythms in which discussion, argument, and suggestion can take place, a togetherness that lasts only an evening, but perhaps leaves traces in the social, economic, and cultural identity of the Leipziger Straße.

This contribution was created in the framework of the research project Complexes: Models of Responsive Practices for the 21st Century, that was carried out at the Universität Wien and the Universität der Künste Berlin and funded by the NOMIS Stiftung.

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rübermachen

March – September 2025 Pedestrian underpass Leipziger Straße 60 bzw. 45 10117 Berlin

DIADÉO TRÉSOR

September 2024 – September 2025 Marion-Gräfin-Dönhoff-Platz Leipziger Straße 49 10117 Berlin

GERTRAUDENHAIN

March 2024 – September 2025 Spitteleck / Wallstraße 1 10117 Berlin

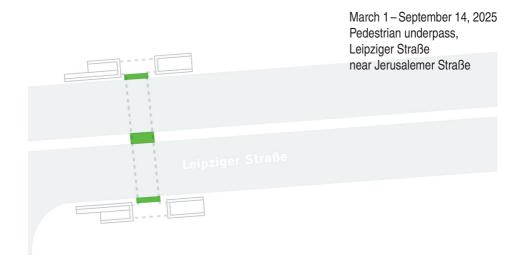
ZU GAST BEI ...

- ① ... the Interessengemeinschaft Leipziger Straße Leipziger Straße 58, 10117 Berlin
- ② ... Algisa Peschel, urban planner and resident of Leipziger Straße Leipziger Straße 40-44, 10117 Berlin
- ③ ... the Galerie Klemm's Leipziger Straße 58, 10117 Berlin
- 4 ... the Kunstverein Ost (KVOST) Leipziger Straße 4, 10117 Berlin
- (5) ... the artists in the workspaces of Kulturraum Berlin gGmbH Leipziger Straße 54, 10117 Berlin
- ⑥ ... the Haus des Papiers Seydelstraße 30 / Ecke Elisabeth-Mara-Straße 10117 Berlin
- 7 ... VISTÉL'S CelloMusikSalon Leipziger Straße 61, 10117 Berlin









rübermachen

ARTIST GROUP MSK7 (Mona Babl, Kati Gausmann, Ricarda Mieth, Anja Sonnenburg)

rübermachen marks an unspectacular crossing of Leipziger Straße, the pedestrian underpass at the corner of Jerusalemer Straße, the remains of the old infrastructure, infiltrating it with fleeting images and sounds of common perceptions in the urban structure.

The title of this three-part intervention refers to the history of Leipziger Straße in the GDR, its transformation from a dead-end to a main thoroughfare from east to west, and the division of the residential and business district by the enormous volume of traffic.

The project explores overcoming borders, both associatively and in a very concrete manner.

On Leipziger Straße, the many lanes of automotive traffic make it difficult for pedestrians to quickly cross the road. They are led through a now dilapidated pedestrian tunnel beneath the road instead. This tunnel is the focus of this three-part installation.





Above ground, the underpass is made partially visible on the road's median with chalk. During the course of the installation, this marking will fade, be renewed, and thus change its color.

Underground, the tunnel is played acoustically. A sound collage defamiliarizes the unaccommodating atmosphere in the tunnel and offers fleeting associations of other surroundings and our own memories. Like a short-wave radio receiver, individual sounds and meanings crystallize and disappear again.

On a digital advertising display directly next to the tunnel, five "cinemagrams," short videos displaying the volume of a word being said, are shown 180 times a day between the standard ten-second ads with the ambiguous terms that refer to the temporary intervention. Who is ignoring whom, what is subverted or walked over and who or what could collapse or explode, that remains an open question.

rübermachen

/ry:be maxen/

[1] historical meaning: in the sense of "leaving the country, fleeing," referring to escaping the GDR (1949–1990) illegally, at risk of life and limb. In West Germany (1949–1990), the term was used for critics of the state: "Geh' doch nach drüben," "Well go over there, then"; [2] crossing a border from one place to the next; synonyms: cross (over), go (over)

Photos p. 18–23: Artist group msk7 (Mona Babl, Kati Gausmann, Ricarda Mieth, Anja Sonnenburg), 2025

unterwandern

/onte'vanden/

[1] to (secretly) appear and act as if aims are shared, while actually pursuing other aim [2] to introduce unfamiliar individuals or ideas (into a circle of people) gradually, unnoticeably and thus to undermine (that circle of people); synonyms: undermine, infiltrate

übergehen

/y.be ge:en/

[1] to move from one place or state to another; [2] to ignore something, intentionally not perceive something, leave out, skip over; *synonyms*: cross (over), dismiss



überlaufen

/ˈvːbɐ laʊfən/

[1] to overflow the edge of a vessel, container; [2] to be swamped by too many people at the same time; [3] to change to the other side in a conflict; *synonyms*: overflow, swamp, leave, desert







auffliegen

/aufflixgn/

[1] to leave the ground using wings, to take off, to fly away; [2] to open suddenly and quickly; [3] when something becomes known or discovered despite desired secrecy; [4] [obsolete] to be destroyed by an explosion; [5] [slang] to end abruptly; synonyms: soar, explode

untergehen

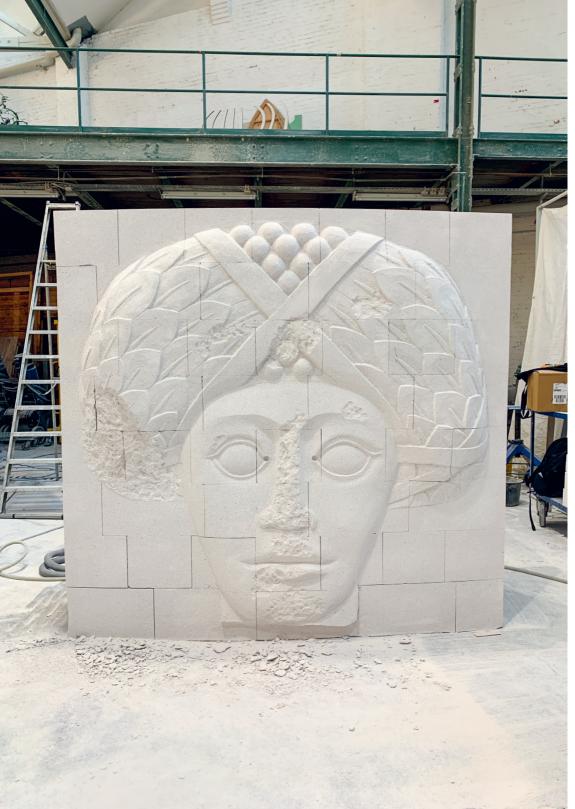
/onte ge:en/

[1] to sink, or disappear into something else, beneath the surface of the water (in a lake/ocean) to disappear and not resurface, to drown; [2] for sounds: when something becomes no longer audible because other sound or noise drowns something out; [3] to become extinct, to fall victim to a catastrophe, to be destroyed, to collapse; [4] to disappear from the horizon, to sink; synonyms: sink, drown, disappear









Diadéo trésor

KANDIS FRIESEN

September 2024 – September 2025 Marion-Gräfin-Dönhoff-Platz Leipziger Straße 49 10117 Berlin

Diadéo trésor is a structure for monumental memory, refracted through the lens of the Wertheim department store. It takes form as a sculptural installation and a series of sonic events (sound works, walking tours, workshops) in a park along Leipziger Straße in central Berlin. The work is a relay and an amplifier, a space where historical silence, resonance, and dissonance can be encountered and transmitted: history as a process and a relation, the refusal of a singular narrative or monumental form.

A central figure in twentieth century capitalist-colonial distribution and display, the department store emerged from the structure of the nineteenth century world fair, connecting the museum, the market, the monument, and the garden. Built the same year as the 1896 Great Industrial Exposition of Berlin, the flagship Wertheim store at Leipziger Platz was the largest and most technologically advanced department store in Europe at the time. Interwoven into







the colonial German economy, a distinction was made: Jewishowned *Warenhäuser* like Wertheim and Tietz were soon classified differently than gentile-owned *Kaufhäuser* (such as Karstadt), subject to discriminatory taxation and maligned as "modern-day bazaars" by the elite. Wertheim was attacked and then expropriated by the Nazi regime, bombed to ruins during the Second World War, and eventually cleared in 1956 for the new GDR border zone at Potsdamer Platz. Archaeologist Wilhelm Unverzagt removed just one object from the store's ruins before it was gone: a stone head carved in the style of ancient Greece, 30 cm across—a size that he could carry in his arms. It sat in his office until his death, when his secretary donated it to Stadtmuseum Berlin, where it now can be found on a storage shelf in Spandau.

My sculptural installation in the park is anchored in this small architectural artifact, which originally stood high up on the store's exterior wall, its face clearly damaged from a fall. Carved from a wall-like structure of aerated concrete block, the sculpture is a scaled-up rendering of this small damaged head. This concrete

block is a cheap and efficient building material, and was used to reconstruct much of Europe after the Second World War. Usually its porous surface is hidden from sight, but here its exterior is unprotected, slowly disintegrating and stained with graffiti and dirt—impossible to preserve. Echoing the head's laurel crown is a curved row of laurel bushes, producing an off-center garden in the middle of the park. The bushes amplify the role of both the wreath and the laurel plant itself as continuing symbols of honorific memorial that date back to Greco-Roman traditions, still invoked in western European imaginaries of memory and power.

Integral to the work, I invited artists to respond to the installation, the stone artifact, and its intersecting histories through aural means: sound works, walking tours, and workshops. In *Diadéo Speaks*, Nour Sokhon offers a fragmented soundscape of Leipziger Strasse, through collaged interviews and field recordings. Saverio Cantoni and Nicole Angela Pearson narrate Wertheim's ruinous forms in *The Witness' Scars*, revealing the fraught legacies that lie beneath the facade of empire and the promise of capitalism. These two





works are accessible through an on-site app, and amplified in collective listening sessions. Yevehniia Moliar of DE NE DE led What's in the Bushes?, a deeply-researched walking tour of the plant life and GDR landscaping legacies of Leipziger Strasse, ending in a linocut workshop. Talya Lubinsky developed Catalogue of Laments (The Scroll of How), a polyphonic series of walks led by her and artists Rüzgâr Buşki and Kwame Aidoo, ending in a collective indexing exercise. These sonic forms are transmissions, circulating around the installation, monuments, and plant life in the park. They intersect with the neighborhood's residents and resident histories, as they also push up against historical and material erasures. They are a form of gathering, a kind of listening and speaking in construction.

Embracing forms of echo and reflection, the work is an anchor for myriad histories that resound and circulate through Leipziger Straße: the legacies of German colonialism and Nazi fascism, the cold war and border walls, and the post-1989 era, which saw Wertheim's ruinous underground vault turned into the epic techno club Tresor, a vital site of Black history through the amplification











of Detroit techno. Tresor was evicted in 2010 for the new Mall of Berlin, designed as an "homage" to Wertheim and built by exploited Romanian guest workers, who were forced to organize for basic dignity and pay.

The work's title is a micro poem in two parts: *diadéo*, the ancient Greek verb for the gesture of the laurel crown—to bind fast, across, and through. This binding of memory in myriad directions and layers is the anchor of the work. And *trésor* names both the vault that holds and protects (German: *Tresor*), and the valuable thing held within (French: *trésor*); with monumental memory often separated from the world and from relation, *Diadéo trésor* binds historical narrative to the form of its transmission.

PARTICIPATING ARTISTS:

Nour Sokhon

Saverio Cantoni & Nicole Angela Pearson

Talya Lubinsky, mit Rüzgâr Buşki, Kwame Aidoo & Nour Sokhon

DE NE DE (Yevheniia Moliar & Masha Katrich)

Photos:

P. 24: Kandis Friesen, 2024

P. 25: Cleo Wächter, 2024

P. 26, 28, 29 (top right), 30:

Laura Fiorio, 2024

P. 27, 29 (top left): Piotr Pietrus, 2024 P. 29 (bottom): Holger Herschel, 2025



Gertraudenhain

March 2024 – September 2025 Spitteleck / Wallstraße 1 10117 Berlin

CHRISTOF ZWIENER



 \uparrow Preparation of the Spitteleck/Wallstraße 1 area for the $\emph{Gertraudenhain}$ in March 20244.

← The Gertraudenhain in May 2025. Photos: Christof Zwiener

A Vibrant Model for a Sustainable City

Gertraudenhain is a growing sculptural intervention on Leipziger Straße, one of Berlin's most environmentally burdened urban areas. Since early 2024, a tiny forest has been growing here based on the concept of Japanese botanist Akira Miyawaki, which foresees the dense planting of degraded areas with species of trees and bushes that are appropriate. This method accelerates growth, binds carbon dioxide, improves air quality, and promotes biodiversity. In addition, tiny forests serve as stepping stone biotopes that offer threatened flora and fauna new habitats and strengthen the city's ecological stability.

Christoph Zwiener's artistic conception combines this ecological strategy with a social aspect: as an accessible mini-forest, *Gertraudenhain* is intended to create a palpable mini-climate, improving the area around Spittelmarkt in ecological and social terms. The close inclusion of the local residents in planning, designing, and maintaining the mini-forest insures a long-term anchoring of the project. *Gertraudenhain* is thus a vibrant site of exchange about urban planning, sustainability, and the interaction of art, culture, and urban production.

Gertraudenhain is more than just a foresting project. It is also a social and sculptural space that opens new possibilities for joint action. The project improves the quality of life at Spitteleck, creating a location of encounter and sustainably animating public space.





← *Gertraudenhain* planting campaign in April 2024. Photo: Judith Laub ↑ The *Gertraudenhain* in January 2025. Photo: Christof Zwiener



↑ The *Gertraudenhain* in March 2025. Photo: Laura Fiorio

→ The *Gertraudenhain* in May 2025. Photos: Holger Herschel

The social and ecological advantages of *Gertraudenhain* make it a model project of future-based urban planning and creative collaboration. With its visible and palpable positive impact, it should be recognized over the long term as a component of urban planning and be a protected site over the long term at Spitteleck.

Leipziger Straße is shaped by a dense urban structure with a high traffic volume and air pollution. *Gertraudenhain* here exemplifies a form of urban planning that is climate resilient. Its dense planting filters toxins from the air, cools the ambient temperature, and creates a green oasis in a highly soil-sealed urban space.







Confronted with climate change and heat waves at ever greater frequency, the maintenance and expansion of green islands like this one will become increasingly important. *Gertraudenhain* is a concrete example of how unused surfaces can be transformed into valuable urban forest areas. Due to its climate-regulating impact, it contributes not only to improving the city climate but also shows practical solutions for sustainable urban development.

Beside its ecological function, *Gertraudenhain* fulfills a key task in environmental formation: residents, children in particular, are actively included in processes of planting and maintenance. Forest pedagogy programs and interactive educational offerings promote an awareness for natural life cycles and increase residents' understanding of nature.

To secure the long-term maintenance of *Gertraudenhain*, social participation and commitment are required. For this reason, regular discussion events are held with experts on subjects such as ecological alternatives to sealed surfaces, urban art, land art, and sustainable cultural production. These formats are co-organized by a neighborhood group to integrate local concerns in the project as well.



Gertraudenhain is more than a tiny forest, it is a vibrant example of how to combine nature, art, and community. Its positive ecological and social effects make it a key project for sustainable urban development that shows how cities can be made more resilient, improve quality of life, and become more climate friendly.

The long-term protection and maintenance of *Gertraudenhain* are essential to develop its positive impact. It offers not only a response to the current challenges of urban development, but is also an inspirational model for other urban spaces. As a green oasis in an urban area with a high environmental burden, *Gertraudenhain* invites everyone to engage actively and to participate jointly in designing a city that is ecologically responsible, socially networked, and artistically inspired.

← The *Gertraudenhain* in May 2025. Photos: Christof Zwiener

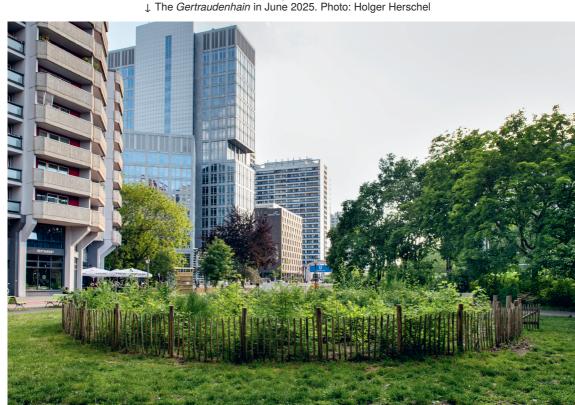




Photo: Laura Fiorio, 2024

A SHORT HISTORY OF A LONG STREET: LEIPZIGER STRAßE Edouard Compere

Leipziger Straße is one of Berlin's most important streets, and at the same time one about which opinions differ greatly. While there is largely a consensus about the significance and identity of the boulevards Unter den Linden or Kurfürstendamm, the essence of Leipziger Straße is more difficult to grasp. Usually, it only gets mentioned in the press when reporting about traffic accidents. It houses institutions of the federal government, but also a shopping mall. More than 6,000 people live on Leipziger Straße. For many, it's just a hideous concrete canyon and an architectural remainder of divided Berlin, for others it's a place of potential, a Sleeping Beauty that has not yet fully awakened and been entirely rediscovered.

Leipziger Straße is a site where many city-wide debates get fought out, ranging from the subject of traffic, living, or what constitutes urbanity and quality of life in the center of a major city. It divides and unites at the same time, in many ways representing a microcosm of the city as a whole, revealing a great deal about what characterizes Berlin and the challenges the city faces.

Leipziger Straße has existed in Berlin since the late seventieth century, when the Friedrichstadt was built as an extension of the city to the southwest according to the plans of Prussian king Frederick I. The long straight road connecting Spittelmarkt and the new Potsdamer Tor (Potsdam Gate) was based on the old eastwest link between Berlin and Leipzig and given its current name in 1775. The layout of the surrounding streets and the geometric perfection of the octagon at Leipziger Platz attest to the strict rationality of this planned addition to the city. In the eighteenth century. majestic palaces were built, especially at the intersection of Wilhelmstraße at the western end of the street. The Berlin porcelain maker Königliche Porzellan-Manufaktur also erected its first manufactory here. In the nineteenth century, the street gained in significance politically. At the former location of the porcelain manufactory, the Prussian Herrenhaus (upper house of the Prussian parliament) was built in 1899 and is today the home of the

German Bundesrat.¹ The War Ministry was located just a few meters away and the Reichspostamt (Postal Ministry) was located at the intersection of Mauerstraße, today housing Berlin's Museum für Kommunikation.

After this initial, state-driven project, the street increasingly developed into a shopping and business district. Special highlights were the major department stores Wertheim (finished in 1906, on Leipziger Platz) and Tietz (opened in 1900, west of Dönhoffplatz), that shaped the image of the street over the long run. If in prior centuries pomp and splendor were largely reserved for aristocracy and the state, in the early twentieth century a new, bourgeoise luxury developed on Leipziger Straße. The architecture of the department stores surpassed that of the aristocratic palaces in terms of beauty and modernity, while inside a fantastic world of consumer products made shopping a special experience. Fashion houses, photography studios, and restaurants complemented the other offerings. Today, all that remains of this splendor is WMF-Haus on the corner of Mauerstraße: completed in 1904, the building's façade is decorated with bronze reliefs and mosaics.

When the famous dance café Moka Efti opened on the corner of Friedrichstraße, Leipziger Straße's reputation as a site of entertainment and consumption was well established, complemented by Potsdamer Platz at the western end of the street, which also offered special urban delights. The urban development and modernization that took place in the 1930s, first in the Weimar Republic and then under the Nazis, left few traces of this. Only the monumental Reichsluftfahrtministerium (Air Travel Ministry, built in 1936, today the Finance Ministry) on the corner of Wilhelmstraße still attests to the massive redesign program that was underway at the time.

Nazi war policy brought the hustle and bustle of Leipziger Straße to an abrupt end. In May 1945, more than half of the buildings along the street were destroyed. Due to its function as an east-west thoroughfare and its proximity to centers of political power like the New Chancellery on Wilhelmstraße, it was the scene of heavy fighting. Aerial photographs from the early 1950s show that huge vacant plots remained after the demolition of many heavily

While the building for the German Reichtstag was under construction (1871–1894), the parliament assembled in a building located next to the Herrenhaus that is no longer extant today. The first sessions were held in a building located at Leipziger Straße 75-76, opposite Dönhoffplatz.

damaged buildings and the clearing of the rubble. But for two decades, other than the step-by-step demolition of most remaining structures, nearly nothing happened. Leipziger Straße was located in the Soviet sector, where the focus was directed further east when it came to reconstruction and new building. The construction of Karl-Marx-Allee, which began in 1952, and redesigning the eastern city center around Alexanderplatz were prioritized during the second half of the 1960s.

Leipziger Straße was not forgotten. In the designs submitted for a planning competition in 1958 that focused on the Alexanderplatz area, the first visions of what the street would eventually become could be found: a broad thoroughfare, lined by high-rises with a modern, generously spaced layout. The division of the city with the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 robbed the street of its significance as an east-west thoroughfare, but a continuation of the already existing roads in the East and a new design in the spirit of the "car-friendly city" was planned. Over the course of the 1960s. the plans for the eastern end of Leipziger Straße as a residential area became more concrete, for example Fischerinsel (1969–73). Unlike the newer apartment complexes on the outer edges of the city, this was a planned reconstruction, but breaking with earlier architecture. The high-rises provided more room for stores and other services, greenery, and traffic. The city was to be replanned in the sense of the goals of creating a socialist society.

The final building plans remained committed to these ideals, although in a form that was adapted to the specifics of the location and the prior history of the street.² The residential complex was bordered on the south by the wall and on the north by the area around Gendarmenmarkt. This resulted in the series of four twin high rises with 23 or 25 floors on the southern side and the three high-rise blocks with 14 floors on the northern side of the street. Despite claims made otherwise, the high-rises on Leipziger Straße were not built using prefab construction, but were erected using reinforced concrete. This consisted of a so-called sliding core of reinforced concrete with a skeleton of concrete bricks and supports. This skeleton was then filled in with prefabricated wall and ceiling elements to form the individual apartments.

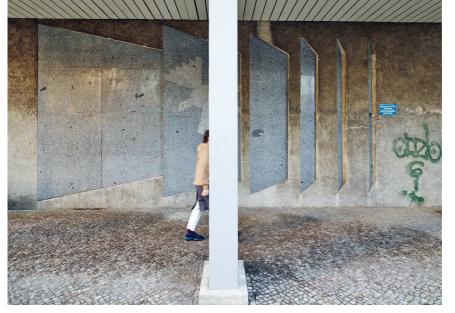
The resulting possibilities for high ceilings and open floor plans made it possible to combine mixed uses in a single building,

2 As was standard in the GDR, design took place in collectives, making it impossible to assign credit to a single architect.

with housing on the upper levels and commercial or social uses on the lower floors. This multi-functional planning stood in contrast to older city structures, where establishments of education, work, childcare, or leisure activities were often located far away from one another. Today, similar issues are debated under the slogan "compact city." Even if these ideals were only pursued to a limited extent on Leipziger Straße, they attest to the high expectations placed on the new residential area.

Beside these theoretical approaches, the reconstruction of Leipziger Straße was driven by a conscious attempt to return to its prior history as a mile of pleasure and shopping. The residential complex that was built here between 1970 and 1979 was supposed to fulfil this function again, but in a modern, socialist style, with a new emphasis on living that earlier was granted little importance. Beside the 2000 apartments, two supermarkets and several thousand square meters of retail space were located on the lower floors of the high rises, as well as restaurants, cafes, and a large cosmetics salon. This offering, unrivaled in the GDR in terms of quality, variety, and density, made the neighborhood an exclusive exception. In the buildings on the northern side of the street, diplomats, journalists, and trade representatives from abroad were housed giving the street a certain cosmopolitan flair. The conscious use of reconstructions also picked up on the past. Examples are the Spittelkolonnaden at Marion-Gräfin-Dönhoff-Platz³ or the Spindlerbrunnen at Spittelmarkt. But the further artistic design of the complex took place in the spirit of the modernist appearance of new buildings. While in the prewar period, the focus was placed on natural stone. figurativeness, and ornamentation, for industrial building a new, corresponding formal language had to be found. All works or architectural-based art on Leipziger Straße attest to this attempt: the dove mosaic by the artist Ortraud Lerch, the relief with an abstract dove by the Czech artist Stanislav Kolíbal, and the wall designs using the form stone systems of the Dresdner artists Karl-Heinz Adler and Friedrich Kracht. They take up the rhythms, the patterns and the abstract character and use modern materials, concrete and glass. The dove mosaic with its vibrant shades of blue, red, and white even repeats original color scheme of the façades. This was continued in the interior design of the many bars and restaurants. no longer extant.

The name "Dönhoffplatz" was abolished in 1975; the location was renamed Marion-Gräfin-Dönhoff-Platz in 2010.



Relief with abstract dove by Czech artist Stanislav Kolíbal, Leipziger Straße 60. Photo: Hendrik Blaukat, 2023

In its complexity, architectural quality, and its wide variety of offerings, the residential area Leipziger Straße was an exception within the exception that East Berlin represented, even in the GDR. The immediate proximity to the wall, with balconies that allowed a view of West Berlin, underscored the uncertainty of the urban role of the street, which led nowhere. It was center and periphery at the same time, removed from a context. This inner tension suddenly became clear upon reunification: Leipziger Straße was suddenly in the very middle of the city, a main traffic axis, and Potsdamer Platz became the new focus of attention—and investment.

Together with the state-owned companies that operated the stores in the GDR, most of the offerings and institutions along the street disappeared, followed by irregular usage, vacancy, and decays. Like the far greater transformation after the Second World War, Leipziger Straße again fell into a deep sleep, but the substance this time remained.

In recent years, the city's cultural life has made Leipziger Straße its own, with numerous galleries, design and architecture firms, and since 2024 Werkbundarchiv—Museum der Dinge. These ensure that the street and its qualities are increasingly gaining attention. The commitment of local actors such as Interessengemeinschaft Leipziger Straße also contributes to reviving the area.



↑ Shaped stone wall by Dresden artists Karl-Heinz Adler and Friedrich Kracht, Leipziger Straße 47. Photo: Hendrik Blaukat, 2023

→ Photo: Hendrik Blaukat, 2023





Krausenstraße. Photo: Hendrik Blaukat, 2023

FROM A CULTURAL VOID TO A HOTSPOT? INTERIOR VIEWS OF A NEIGHBORHOOD

Verena Unbehaun

The exhibition Wohnkomplex Leipziger Straße-Planen, Bauen und Leben in der Hauptstadt der DDR (Wohnkomplex Leipziger Straße: Planning, Building, and Living in the Capital of the GDR) was shown at Museum Mitte from September 2023 to February 2024. In addition to the exhibition, Edouard Compere offered cultural tours that I accompanied several times with a cargo bike offering hot tea. I was able to conduct the following interview with him.

Verena Unbehaun: Edouard, you've already held several cultural tours in the area around Leipziger Straße. Your enthusiasm for the neighborhood with its special architecture was palpable each time. How did you get interested in the subject? What fascinates you so much about it?

Edouard Compere: Although I have lived in Berlin since 2011, I only got more acquainted with Leipziger Straße in 2020, after I had been confronted with GDR art in my studies of art history. This interest led to a project with Kunstverein Ost (KVOST) on architectural art between Alexanderplatz and Wilhelmstraße. For example, I discovered the form stones that characterize the southern side of the street, and fell a bit in love with this serial, industrial, rhythmic art and the architecture around it. There is so much to be learned from the *Wohnkomplex* ("housing complex") Leipziger Straße regarding urban planning in the GDR, its highs and lows and later transformations, so that it never ceased to fascinate me.

VU: What feedback did you receive from tour participants?

EC: There was always a lot of interest and the groups were quite mixed. From residents who lived there from the very start to new residents and visitors from other areas of the city or visiting quests from abroad interested in architecture, there was a bit

1 For more on the project *DA SEID IHR JA!*: https://kvost.de/exhibition/1034.

of everything. People who had lived here for some time now were able to contribute a great deal with stories and memories, often experts participated, architects or historians who were surprised that they had not known more about the street before. I had the impression that Leipziger Straße is still something of an insider tip in Berlin and that I could address a broad audience. Many noticed that they liked the street a lot more after the tour, because only then were they able to understand it.

VU: Thank you, Edouard.

When I became a member of the board of IG Leipziger Straße, there was very little public interest in the neighborhood. In the first year alone, we participated in 79 conversations, conferences, and events. That seemed necessary to us, because Leipziger Straße barely played a role in debates in Berlin-Mitte. The perception of the street was often marked by disinterest: "Leipziger Straße is a cultural void." "Leipziger Straße? People live there?" "I always just drive through it." The northern and the southern sides, it was argued, are far too heterogeneous for any revival or urban planning measures to be effective.

In addition, Leipziger Straße has been a blind spot for almost thirty years now in all urban planning and construction programs. We concluded that a great deal of work was required to ensure that Leipziger Straße is not only just seen as a throughfare. At our neighborhood conference in 2019, we came up with three goals:

- 1. To reduce and slow the traffic flow, create barrier-free pedestrian paths and ways to cross the street
- 2. To establish welcoming outdoor sites, more greenery and landscaping
- 3. Promote the establishment of shops and cafes (in particular a neighborhood community center)

In 2018, 15.7 million cars passed through Leipziger Straße, the nitrogen dioxide levels were 50 percent higher than the allowed emissions level. Leipziger Straße was thus one of Berlin's most environmentally contaminated roads. Nothing to brag about. For this reason, in subsequent years we engaged intensely with traffic policymaking in Berlin-Mitte.

In 2020, it was clear that the Mühlendammbrücke was in need of renovation. The Senate originally planned a basically identical replacement, again with eight lanes and a width of over 45 meters. This plan was revised after widespread public outcry and a call for more citizen participation. The width of the new planned Mühlendammbrücke will now be reduced by six meters. In general, we were able to use this as an opportunity to see how we, as an interdisciplinary network of city planners, activists, historians, and environmental organizations, could have an influence on our neighborhood.

Something similar happened when it came to planning the tram tracks from Alexanderplatz to Kulturforum. Together with a traffic planner from Changing Cities Central, an alternative to the Senate plan was developed, placing the tram line on the southern side of Leipziger Straße, freeing at least 15,000 square meters on the northern side that could then be "unsealed." Leipziger Park was born, at least on paper.

In Spring 2021, in the midst of the pandemic, we started the Day of the Open Road. Each last Sunday of the month, Leipziger Straße was closed to traffic. We wanted to make this gigantic street space available to all and to be able to experience the neighborhood for once from another perspective.

One participant described it as follows:

"I am a child of West Berlin, who looked over from the other side of the wall. Leipziger Straße always remained somewhat hidden to me. I only consciously became aware of it years later as a traffic thoroughfare. It seemed like there were very few people around on the street, not much green, but a lot of gray and tall buildings A non-place that you went through quickly and left behind you. This impression changed slowly when I moved to Spittelmarkt. In 2021, I attended the Day of the Open Road on Leipziger Straße. Suddenly, there were loads of people there, children drawing on the asphalt with colored chalk. What a great idea, to give a place a fully different character, without even needing the bulldozers to arrive. This experience instantly altered my view of the street. It changed from space of transit to a space of transformation. You can see how it's changing: art and fashion is being created, galleries and architectural firms are moving in, classical signs of transformation. People say Berlin is constantly in a state of becoming or never finished.

And I think that's especially true here. We encounter people with smart ideas and with the determination needed to implement them." (from an interview as part of the project *QuartiersBILD*, Summer 2024)

But since we can't hold a demonstration every month where all the residents of Leipziger Straße can come together to draw on the street with chalk, ride their skateboards or scooters, set up tables and chairs for a picnic, and where it's for once quieter, we have to focus on other potentials that the neighborhood has.

At first, we lacked a place where we could meet and exchange ideas: a central location in the neighborhood, a community center. A colleague on the board of directors always says: "Traffic, as we know, is an issue that divides, while culture is one that unites." In the winter of 2022, we rented a storefront on the ground floor of a building on Leipziger Straße. Here, a socio-cultural center for the entire neighborhood was to emerge, our new neighborhood community center.

We are trying to prepare for what might be coming down the road. In future, we will have to focus on subjects that on the one hand apply to the demographic developments, the aging of the residents here, and at the same time the noticeably rising temperatures in a central urban location that is highly sealed, the "heat islands." These two issues are closely related. If a neighborhood loses its social, ecological, or economic balance, the life quality decreases and tensions emerge. That's why we are primarily interested in creating more community, occasions for conversations, meetings and getting to know one another. Art in public space can take on this role, create sites of encounter and exchange, and give the location a certain identity.

In the meantime, there are now six galleries on Leipziger Straße and the Museum der Dinge. The European Month of Photography (EMOP) is taking place here for the second time. In May 2023, tip magazine ran the cover story, "Why Leipziger Straße is Berlin's new art hot spot." Leipziger Straße is becoming an art boulevard, "artistic avant-garde in a housing complex."

In our project *QuartiersBILD*, we introduced residents with personal stories and objects that ware closely linked to life on Leipziger Straße. The basic idea behind the project is that a street combines locations, people, and issues and that it is always good when planning the future to know the past.

Using the method of intervening observation, urban researcher Sebastian Bührig carried out interviews with the residents of Leipziger Straße while working as a "lift boy" in one of the high-rises. Here some of the responses he had:

"At the time, we were surrounded by only mud and dirt. No infrastructure, nothing at all. It took a while until the stores came. But then! Leipziger Straße, that was great! That's what it was like in the GDR. A thousand fashion boutiques, but no baker, no butcher. We were in East City! That was kind of nice."

"It's great with the neighbors here! I have five pairs of keys. K.H.'s key is also there. He had lost his once ... and then there are also a lot here in the building who you know just from the packages they get. A woman from Ecuador lives next door. The kids talked to one another and nobody knew the language of the other. And then I have my special friends, we call one another and ask 'Are you still live, to?' and that's enough."

"There aren't so many families with children now, well, maybe 20 percent. You know, when we moved here, they set up an extra small room for baby carriages, because there were many, many children. Today, most of the residents are elderly. Fifty percent of those still living here have always been here, fifty percent are elderly like me, or older. Even older than me, you know? All old people. And the rest of them, they are the newcomers. Now things are mixing. The old are dying, just the way it is with nature. And it's nice with the young people too." ²

Sebastian Bührig, *Grenzen des Miteinanders: Die Forschungsmethode Einmischende Beobachtung* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2023), 297.

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Zu Gast bei ..., 2024-25. Photos: Poligonal



Traveling guest room from Zu Gast bei ... Photo: Cleo Wächter, 2024

ZU GAST BEI ...

Poligonal – Büro für Stadtvermittlung (Christian Haid und Lukas Staudinger)

What forms of memory, narrative, and coexistence emerge when the city is not seen as an object of planning, but as lived everyday life and a shared community of neighbors? And: how can artistic practice make these processes visible, question and accompany them? The format *Zu Gast bei* ... is dedicated to these issues, examining Leipziger Straße as exemplary for urban dynamics in more general sense: it is a traffic thoroughfare and a historical site, a stage of everyday practices and a backdrop for political, social, and aesthetic negotiations.

Based on the submissions to the competition Kunst im Stadtraum Leipziger Straße the itinerant outreach and discourse program Zu Gast bei ... spans an arch connecting art, everyday life, and issues of urban society along the subjects that the artists Friesen, msk7, und Christof Zwiener treat in their site-specific works: ecology, participation, and memory. This takes place in a special way: in living rooms, associations, art galleries, studios and on the sidewalk, the street becomes a site of narration, memory, fantasy, and negotiating collective futures, and thus a site of participation. This allows a special element of the program to emerge: an itinerant quest room that moves from place to place and from event to event. This mobile room serves as a symbolic and physical space for encounter and exchange. Here, quests and hosts come together with equal standing; intimate conversations can take place and at the same time urban mobility and versatility can be experienced. The guest room itself thus becomes an actor in the urban narrative that with every new station delivers new stories, memories, and perspectives.

The concept or urban curating, as Elke Krasny describes it, is a central aspect of the program design. Urban curating does not understand the city merely as an exhibition space, but as a vibrant social and political space in which cultural practices are interwoven with everyday experiences and power structures. At issue is bringing multiple actors and voices together, developing interdisciplinary

formats and promoting participative, situational encounters that are both temporary and processual. *Zu Gast bei ...* implements this understanding in practice by initiating social processes that make the city available to experience as a dynamic community that can be shaped by all.

Zu Gast bei ... makes perspectives visible that are often overlooked in everyday urban life, and brings actors together whose work has shaped Leipziger Straße in the past and continues to do so in the present. For example, Algisa Peschel, a retired urban planner who experienced Berlin as both a divided and a reunited city. opened her living room over the rooftops of the city. Over coffee and cake and with old photo albums, a dialogue emerged about urban history and personal memories. How has the street changed? What narratives continue to endure, and which need to be added? It is this narrative approach that makes memory come alive, unlike a dry museum presentation. A similar impulse inspired the tour with Interessengemeinschaft Leipziger Straße. where "lost" sites and suppressed stories were rediscovered together with art historian Edouard Compere. In this way, collective memory becomes present practice: oral history becomes urban method.

Oral history as a method stands for a paradigmatic transformation in approaching urban knowledge: away from exclusive expert opinions to multiple, subjective narratives that move collective experience to the focus of attention. By way of oral stories, everyday realties become that often remain invisible in official city planning or archives are made palpable. This allows them to emerge not as a rigid product, but as a process of joint memory and negotiation, a dynamic web of individual life stories and collective experiences.

The city here is understood as a "coproduced" structure that various actors—residents, artists, initiatives, politics, and administration—jointly create, negotiate, and interpret. This perspective is consistent with current scholarly approaches from urban research that understand the city as a social, political, and cultural space of production. The city is thus not a passive backdrop, but an active space of social negotiation in which urban society comes together in ever new ways and where power relations become visible.

Instead of experts in podium discussions, local residents, artists and, neighborhood initiatives became the hosts. They opened their doors and made their spaces the stages for dialogue. For example,

artists at the Kulturraum Berlin gGmbH offered insights into their practices, including Robin Leveroos (Macromatter), whose interdisciplinary works oscillate between puppetry, queer object use, and performance; Donata Rigg, who in a reading from her literary works reflected on personal and social realities, as well as the director duo Vöcks de Schwindt, who in the framework of a table staging took the audience on a trip from Leipziger Straße to Rome. The subsequent discussion with Pirkko Husemann (Kulturraum Berlin gGmbH) emphasized that precarious conditions increasingly encumber artistic production in urban contexts and spaces of artistic work become politically controversial spaces.

Taking Leipziger Straße as a point of departure, the discussion at Galerie Klemm's was about spatial production and urban transformation. In the field of tension between a six-lane traffic thoroughfare and artistic appropriation, urban researcher Anna Bernegg, architect Katrin Brünjes, artist Kandis Friesen and gallerist Silvia Bonsiepe discussed spatial potentials, urban development, and the approach to existing buildings for artistic uses.

The ecological challenges of the present were also not left out. At Haus des Papiers, for example, the artists Jan-Micha Gamer and the curator-team Annette Berr and Annika Lorenz discussed recycling and upcycling in art. In a vocal performance wearing a paper outfit, drag queen and opera singer Shlomi Moto Wagner opened additional resonance spaces on sustainability, society, and lived democracy. The evening showed that ecology is not just a technological challenge, but also a cultural practice, and has to be considered in art as well as in urban development.

All events on the program shared a curatorial approach promoting diversity and polyvocality, making it available to experience. For example, in the discourse on Eastern modernism at Kunstverein Ost, architect Martin Maleschka and monument expert Luise Rellensmann spoke not only about marginalized architectural history, but also spotlighted artistic positions that engage with the material and immaterial legacy of the GDR. Or as guests with Almuth and Douglas from Vistéls CelloMusikSalon, where classical music and "high culture" are negotiated in new ways and democratized beyond established institutions, on the street and on an equal footing. The format opens spaces in which various forms of knowledge, life realities, and aesthetics exist alongside one another, it relies on informal encounters, situative learning, and listening to one another.

This open and dialogical approach to the city and to culture reflects contemporary debates about urban spaces as sites of social negotiation and identity formation. The city is not just material infrastructure, but a polyvocal social space where history, memory, and the present intersect. Artistic interventions open new perspectives on urban processes by bringing forward invisible narratives, making marginalized voices audible and alternative models for the future visible.

We ultimately arrive at the realization that Leipziger Straße is not just a thoroughfare, but a complex urban organism full of stories, conflicts, and potential—a neighborhood, after all. The program *Zu Gast bei ...* makes it possible to experience this and exemplifies how art in urban space not only shapes the city, but also negotiates and presents the city. It is a program with open doors, surprising insights, and new friendships. It creates alliances between residents and artists, between history and present, between everyday life and utopia. And perhaps it is just that: an invitation to urban society to be a guest, but also to become a host.

Concept and production, *Zu Gast bei ...* together with Franziska Zahl und Miriam Rausch.

 $[\]rightarrow$ Photo: Poligonal, 2025

27.03.2025 Zu GAST BEI ... DEM KANSTLER: IMMEN IN DEN ARBEITSKÄUMEN DER KULTURRAUM BERLIN Danne für die John fe Gibblicke in unterlann fe Gefilche dan locks de Schwindt Viden Dank ihr Lieben for die spouverde Einblidse und de sympathide Abend-Perc

KISR-KUNST IM STADTRAUM

KISR-Kunst im Stadtraum is a program under the auspices of Department of Art, Culture and History, Mitte District Office in Berlin. Each of the projects undertaken in this program takes an urban situation in flux as a point of departure, inviting artists to react to the spaces they find.

KISR – Kunst im Stadtraum began with Hansaplatz (2018/19) and then followed with Karl-Marx-Allee (2020/21). Both neighborhoods attest to the history of postwar Berlin and stand for differing ideas of what "modern life" should be like. This third edition (2023/25) takes us to Leipziger Straße, another urban situation with utopian potential in terms of urban planning. Built in the 1970s, due to its combination of history and social visions and the linked architecture and urban planning as well as current uses and debates, it is an ideal terrain for a complex artistic approach.

Urban space is not a neutral background for art. It is a complex arrangement in which infrastructure, social realities, and various interests and uses intertwine with one another. In this context, the space itself becomes a player: active, contradictory, even resistant. In this way, artistic work can often encounter its most sensitive spots, technical or static challenges, dilapidated substances, or legal frameworks. And in so doing, it frequently reaches its own limits. In addition, there are increasingly urgent issues such as sustainability, but vandalism is also a concern.

COMPETITION PROCEDURE

The three temporary works by the artists Kandis Friesen, msk7, and Christof Zwiener were selected for implementation by a prize jury in the framework of a single phase, invited, anonymous art competition according to the guidelines for planning competitions (RPW 2013) and Berlin's policy on art in architecture and urban space.

The following artists participated in the art competition KISR – Kunst im Stadtraum an der Leipziger Straße:

Ana Alenso, Kandis Friesen, Ethan Hayes-Chute, Georg F. Klein, Candy Lenk, msk7, Christl Mudrak, Barbara Müller, Marion Orfila, Wouter Osterholt, Jens Pencho, Matheus Rocha-Pitta, Sonya Schönberger, SP_PS (Sharon Paz and Petra Spielhagen), and Christof Zwiener

These artists were selected in the framework of a prior non-anonymous application process open to all candidates from Berlin and Brandenburg. The selection of the fifteen artists was made from among 100 randomly chosen valid applications at the suggestion of an advisory committee consisting of Roberto Uribe Castro, Dr. Lorena Juan (COVEN Berlin) and Pfelder.

The prize jury met on December 8, 2023, chaired by Henrik Schrat. Members of the prize jury were:

Expert jurors: Felix Schramm; Henrik Schrat (chair, prize jury); Nasan Tur

General jurors: Dr. Almut Neumann, District Councilor for Public Space, and Bernhard Zelwies, a Leipziger Straße resident

Non-voting expert juror: Jasmin Werner, artist

Experts: Hendrik Blaukat, member, board of directors, Interessengemeinschaft Leipziger Straße e. V. Edouard Compere, intern/CAMPI-Fellow, History and Memory Culture, Department of Art, Culture and History, Berlin-Mitte District Office; Dr. Ewa Gossart, advisor, Kunst am Bau und Kunst im Stadtraum, Senate Department for Culture and Social Cohesion; Thomas Katzke, director, Monument Office, Berlin-Mitte District Office; Jakob Koenig, planning data clerk, Office for Urban Planning,

Berlin-Mitte District Office; Dr. Ute Müller-Tischler, director, Department of Art, Culture and History, Berlin-Mitte District Office; Stefan Schönbaumsfeld, department manager, Office of Streets and Green Spaces/Permits for Special Use, Berlin-Mitte District Office; Britta Schubert, expert for procedural matters, Büro für Kunst im öffentlichen Raum, Kulturwerk bbk Berlin GmbH; Fred Sommermeier, department head, Wohnungsbaugesellschaft Berlin-Mitte (WBM)

Awarded by:

Land Berlin

Represented by Berlin-Mitte District Office Office for Continuing Education and Culture Department of Art, Culture and History

Competition management:

Judith Laub, head, Urban Culture and Public Art Cleo Wächter, intern/CAMPI-Fellow Urban Culture and Public Art

Competition administration and preliminary technical examination:

Birgit Schlieps, artist Michaela Nasoetion, artist Berlin-Mitte District Office Mathilde-Jacob-Platz 1 10551 Berlin

District Mayor's Office
Office for Continuing Education and Culture
Department of Art, Culture, and History

District Mayor
Stefanie Remlinger
Director, Office for Continuing Education
and Culture
Dr. Lale Behzadi
Director, Department of Art, Culture, and History
Dr. Ute Müller-Tischler
Head, Urban Culture and Public Art
Judith Laub

KISR – Kunst im Stadtraum an der <u>Leipziger</u> Straße (2023–2025):

Project management: Judith Laub Project coordinators: Josephine Steffens (2025); Julius Kaftan, and Cleo Wächter (2023–2024) Discourse and outreach: Poligonal (Christian Haid and Lukas Staudinger)

in collaboration with Miriam Rausch (2024)

and Franziska Zahl (2025) **Tours:** Liesa Andres

Event management and outreach:

Hendrik Blaukat

Production management: kk-archpro

Competition administration and preliminary techni-

cal examination: Birgit Schlieps and

Michaela Nasoetion

Graphic design: operative.space

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www.kunst-im-stadtraum.berlin



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Gertrauden bridge. Photo: Laura Fiorio, 2024

