

TOM WOLF, MANUEL ROY AND ROBERTO SASSI

# SECRET BERLIN



JONGLEZ PUBLISHING

# CONTENTS

## *North Mitte*

---

GÜNTER LITFIN MEMORIAL FOR VICTIMS OF THE WALL	14
RABBIT SILHOUETTES ON CHAUSSEESTRAÙE	16
THE OLD MONUMENTAL CROSS OF THE BERLINER DOM	18
REMAINS OF THE BERLIN WALL IN THE CATHEDRAL PARISH CEMETERY I	19
THE WINDOWS OF THE INVALIDS' HOUSE	20
JAMES TURRELL LIGHTING INSTALLATION	22
ANIMAL ANATOMICAL THEATRE	24
FRONTAGE OF THE OLD HOFBEAMTENHAUS WILHELM II	30
THE MUSEUM OF SILENCE	32
THE PAVEMENT ON AUGUSTSTRAÙE 69	34
THE TADSHIKISCHE TEESTUBE'S HISTORIC DECOR	35
THE STONE OF MONBIJOU PARK	36
THE HANDSHAKE ON SOPHIENSTRAÙE	38
HONI'S WINDOW	40
THE LITFASS COLUMN ON MÜNZZSTRAÙE	42
SIGNS OF RESISTANCE ON THE UMWELTBIBLIOTHEK	44

## *South Mitte*

---

ALLEGORICAL SCULPTURE OF THE SPREE	48
DOLPHIN SCULPTURE	50
PIPES OF THE LUSTGARTEN RIVERBANK WALL	52
THE WORLD'S LARGEST GRANITE BOWL	54
TOMBSTONE OF ALEXANDER VON DER MARK	55
THE ROSENSTRAÙE MEMORIAL	56
THE FOUNDATIONS OF THE 'ALTE SYNAGOGUE'	58
THE WHITE CROSS OF SAINT MARY'S CHURCH	60
FOYER OF THE BERLIN COURTHOUSE	62
REMAINS OF THE CITY WALLS	66
THE CRYPT OF THE PAROCHIALKIRCHE	68
THE GESCHÄFTSHAUS TIETZ	70
MUTTER HOPPE RESTAURANT BAS-RELIEFS	72
PLAQUE OF THE PALAST DER REPUBLIK	74
THE ARM OF THE STATUE OF THE FORMER STATE COUNCIL BUILDING	76
THE REMAINS OF CÖLLN TOWN HALL	78
DOORS OF THE PUBLIC LIBRARY	79
THE COMMEMORATIVE STONE OF FISCHERKIEZ	80
ERMELER HOUSE BAS-RELIEF	82
THE WUSTERHAUSISCHER BÄR	84
GERTRUDE'S MOUSE	86
HISTORICAL MILESTONE ON DÖNHOF PLATZ	88
THE MICHAELSEN PALAIS	92
THE BUILDING AT 8 SCHÜTZENSTRAÙE	94
ALFANDARY HOUSE BAS-RELIEFS	96
THE MARBLE PANELS OF THE MOHRENSTRAÙE METRO STATION	98
MEMORIAL TO KARL LIEBKNECHT	99

## *Kreuzberg*

---

DIASPORA GARDEN	102
STAIRCASE OF THE GERMAN STEELWORKERS UNION	104
REMAINS OF THE STRESEMANNSTRAÙE RAILWAY LINE	106
THE TOLL WALL	108
THE UNDERGROUND HOUSE	110
CONCRETE PILLARS OF YORCKSTRAÙE	112
LAPIDARIUM	116
PLAQUE OF THE EMOTIONALLY ADVANCED ANDROID	117
ENTRANCE HALL OF THE BUILDING AT KREUZBERGSTRAÙE 29	118
OLD GAS STATION	119
THE TOMB OF ARCHDUKE LEOPOLD FERDINAND OF AUSTRIA	120
GRAVE OF THE MÜHLENHAUPT FAMILY	122
THE MENDELSSOHN-BARTHOLDY FAMILY EXHIBITION ROOM	123
MAUSOLEUM OF THE OPPENFELD FAMILY	124
TOMB OF ERWIN REIBEDANZ	126
THE BIEDERMANN TOMB	128
COLUMBIAHAUS CONCENTRATION CAMP MEMORIAL	130
THE MURAL FRESCO OF FICHTESTRAÙE 2	132
THE TOAD AT PRINZENSTRASSE UNDERGROUND STATION	134
THE STEHFISCH SCULPTURE	135
THE RITTERHOF	136
BAS-RELIEFS OF THE ENGELBECKEN HOF	138
SLABS OF BITUMEN ALONG THE LEUSCHNERDAMM	140
RELIEFS ON THE FACADE OF ADALBERTSTRAÙE 79	142
THE FACADE OF THE BETHANIEN HOSPITAL	144
THEODOR FONTANE'S PHARMACY	146
REMAINS OF THE BROMMY BRIDGE	148
ABANDONED LOHMÜHLENINSEL PETROL STATION	150
ART INSTALLATIONS ON REICHENBERGER STRAÙE	152

## *Neukölln*

---

REMAINS OF 'THE PARISH CEMETERY LABOUR CAMP'	158
THE FIST FROM THE GRENADIERS' TOMB	160
THE TEMPELHOFER FELD OBSERVATORY	162
THE FORGOTTEN SYMBOLS OF THE IDEAL-PASSAGE	164
THE STONES OF ALFRED-SCHOLZ-PLATZ	166
CAFÉ BOTANICO GARDEN	168
SILENT RIXDORF GARDEN	169
SRI MAYURAPATHY MURUGAN HINDU TEMPLE	170

## *Schöneberg*

---

WINDOWS OF THE CHURCH OF THE TWELVE APOSTLES	174
MASONIC SYMBOLS OF THE KACHELHAUS	176

# CONTENTS

THE BERLIN COURT OF APPEAL	178
MOSAIC OF A COW	180
FACADES OF KIRCHBACHSTRASSE 1 AND 2	182
THE 'RELOCATED' TOMB OF THE LANGENSCHIEDT FAMILY	184
VISITING THE SCHÖNEBERG COURT	186
ORTE DES ERINNERNS MEMORIAL	188
THE FRONT DOOR OF EISENACHER STRASSE 68	190
THE MUSEUM OF UNHEARD-OF THINGS	191
THE SCHWERBELASTUNGSKÖRPER	192
HISTORICAL COLLECTION OF THE BERLIN POLICE	200
THE PRISON OF GENERAL-PAPE-STRASSE	202
VISIT TO THE MALZFABRIK	206
BLANKE HELLE SCULPTURE	208
THE ORGAN OF THE MARTINLUTHER-GEDÄCHTNISKIRCHE	210
NATUR-PARK-SÜDGELÄNDE	212
ENTRANCE GATES OF THE CECILIENGÄRTEN	214
EISACK TUNNEL	216

## *Charlottenburg - North Wilmersdorf*

---

ALFRED HRDLICKA'S 'DANSE MACABRE'	220
THE THREE GLOBES OF HEERSTRASSE	222
MONUMENT TO THE GLORY OF MOTORCYCLE RACERS	224
ARCHAEOLOGY GALLERY OF SANITARY FACILITIES	226
BUILDING AT NUMBER 17 KAISER FRIEDRICH STRASSE	227
HOLES IN THE PILLARS OF THE LEIBNIZSTRASSE BRIDGE	228
BINNINGER'S CLOCK	230

## *Wilmersdorf – Friedenau*

---

FACADE OF THE BUILDING AT PARISER STRASSE 61	234
GOLDEN MAGNOLIA TREE AT PARISER STRASSE 4	235
THE STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS OF THE CHURCH ON THE HOHENZOLLERNPLATZ	236
THE RED LETTERBOX OF THE FEHRBELLNER PLATZ	238
THE LAHORE AHMADIYYA MOVEMENT MOSQUE	240
THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST CATHEDRAL	242
A104 MOTORWAY TUNNEL BUILDING	244
HOUSE AT NIEDSTRASSE 4	246
TOMB OF HEINRICH SACHS	248

## *Wedding – Moabit – Tiergarten*

---

THE WEDDING SAND DUNE	252
THE SPA PAVILION BAS-RELIEF	254

THE ANTI-KRIEGS-MUSEUM AIR RAID SHELTER	256
THE MEMORIAL FOR DEPORTED JEWS	258
THE PAINTED CEILING OF ALVAR AALTO	260
MUSEUM OF LETTERS	262
THE FACADE OF THOMASUSSTRASSE 5	264
THE HALL OF THE MOABIT COURTHOUSE	266
THE WALLS COMMEMORATING MOABIT PRISON	270
AN OASIS OF GREENERY IN THE HAMBURGER BAHNHOF	272
THE STAIRS OF THE ULAP	274
THE PAPER LEAVES OF THE SWISS EMBASSY	276
THE KERBS OF GERMANIA	278
THE POTSDAMER BRÜCKE RING	280
'THE LAST HOUSE MUST REMAIN STANDING!'	281
THE GAS STREET LAMPS OF THE OPEN AIR MUSEUM	282
A VISIT TO THE U2	284

## *Prenzlauer Berg*

---

REVERSE INSCRIPTION ON THE SENEFELDER MONUMENT	288
GDR TOY MUSEUM	290
THE WELL IN THE JEWISH CEMETERY	292
WATER TANKS OF PRENZLAUER BERG	296
TOMB OF THE RIEDEL FAMILY	302
TOMB OF THE PINTSCH FAMILY	303
COVERED PASSAGEWAY OF THE BORNHOLMER STRASSE BORDER POST	304
THE FISHERMAN OF WINSSTRASSE	306
COAT OF ARMS OF THE GRÜNE STADT GATE	308
THE TOMB OF THE LEWINSOHN AND NETTER FAMILIES	312

## *Friedrichshain – Rummelsburg*

---

CIRCULAR GARDEN OF THE GEORGEN-PAROCHIAL II CEMETERY	316
THE COLUMNS OF WEBERWIESE	318
SIGN OF THE HORNS ON THE 'CRAFTSMAN AND SON' STATUE	320
FORMER PINTSCH AG ADMINISTRATIVE HEADQUARTERS	322
LEANING TOWER OF STRALAU CHURCH	326
SHOT TOWER	328
HARTUNG'S COLUMNS	330

## *Pankow – Lichtenberg – Marzahn Hellersdorf – Treptow/Köpenick*

---

REMAINS OF THE BLANKENFELDE RECEPTION CAMP	334
GEOLOGICAL WALL	336
LUNA BUNKER	338

# CONTENTS

THE OLDEST REMAINS OF THE BERLIN WALL	339	'THE BERLIN BRAIN'	426
THE CHERUBS OF PANKOW	340	THE COLUMN ON SCHWANENWERDER ISLAND	428
ART INSTALLATIONS IN GUSTAV-ADOLF-STRASSE	342	THE COMMEMORATIVE STONE AT THE KUNCKEL GLASSWORKS	430
THE DUTCH DISTRICT OF WEIßENSEE	344	THE TELAMONS OF GLIENICKE PARK	436
THE PAINTER OF THE MOTORWERK	346	THE REMAINS OF LITTLE SWITZERLAND	438
DAIMON MUSEUM	348	LOGGIA ALEXANDRA	440
THE HERZBERGE BOILER ROOM	350	THE INSCRIPTION ON THE MACNHOWER STRASSE BRIDGE	442
MEMORIAL TO THE REVOLUTION	352	THE HELICOPTER OF STEINSTÜCKEN	444
FOUR BRONZE LIONS OF THE TIERPARK	354	THE FORMER CHECKPOINT OF DREILINDEN	446
THE MARZAHN TOWER MILL	356	THE FORMER EXCLAVE OF WÜSTE MARK	448
THE HOUSE OF FRICK	358	THE TOMB OF JULIUS WISSINGER	454
WBS 70 MUSEUM APARTMENT	360	THE SYMBOLISM OF THE LANGENSCHIEDT MAUSOLEUM	456
THE 'GRÜNDERZEIT' MUSEUM	362	TRACES OF THE FORMER STAHNSDORF RAILWAY STATION	460
TRUDELTURM VERTICAL WIND TUNNEL	364		
THE SCHMETTERLINGSHORST BUTTERFLY COLLECTION	368		

## *Reinickendorf – Spandau – Grunewald Wilmersdorf – Steglitz/Zehlendorf*

THE CORINTHIAN CAPITAL IN BRIX-GENZMER-PARK	372
THE WATER TOWER IN THE CEMETERY OF HERMSDORF	374
TEGEL RUSSIAN ORTHODOX CEMETERY	376
PLAQUE MARKING JOHN RABE'S LAST KNOWN ADDRESS	378
BIBERTEICH	380
THE MUSEUM FLAT IN THE HASELHORST EXPERIMENTAL DISTRICT	382
MONUMENT TO HOMING PIGEONS	384
SCULPTURE OF A BULL	386
STAAKENS'S OLD CONTROL TOWER	388
THE FIELDS OF KAROLINENHÖHE	390
TOWER OF BERINGER	392
THE SCHILDHORN MONUMENT	394
THE CEMETERY OF THE FOREST OF GRUNEWALD	396
THE PARABOLIC MIRRORS OF THE 'ERSCHIESSUNGSSTÄTTE V'	398
THE OLYMPIA SIGNAL BOX	400
THE DIMENSIONS OF THE CORBUSIERHAUS	402
KREUZKIRCHE	404
MUSEUM OF THE BLIND	408
RUINE DER KUNSTE	410
THE MÄUSEBUNKER	412
MUSEUM OF ENERGY	414
A TRIBUTE TO THE GROSS-LICHTERFELDE TRAMWAY LINE	416
MUNICIPAL WEIGH HOUSE	418
FLIEGEBERG	420
4TH OF JULY SQUARE	422
FORMER LICHTERFELDE WOMEN'S PRISON	424

ALPHABETICAL INDEX	462
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## RABBIT SILHOUETTES ON CHAUSSEESTRAÙE

②

*Crossing borders in fur coats*

ChausseestraÙe 61, 10115 Berlin  
kaninchenfeld.de  
U6 (SchwartzkopffstraÙe)



Despite all the security measures in place, the former border in the heart of Berlin was not impassable. Every day there were hundreds, even thousands, of crossings. These were not the rare and heroic crossings that occurred between 1961 and 1989, but rather the countless comings and goings of rabbits.

The demarcation between the former communist bloc and the West corresponds to a long green belt of great ecological value and rich biodiversity. During the Cold War, rabbits comfortably settled in these demarcated zones. With the end of the German Democratic Republic, everything became more complicated: cross-border infrastructures and so-called no man's lands disappeared faster than expected. The border areas were paradise: there were no hunters, nobody looking after their gardens, and no residents. For a long time, troops positioned at the borders had orders not to shoot the rabbits, and the rabbit tunnels heading towards West Germany were tolerated. It was only at the end of the German Democratic Republic that the rabbits became the victims of hunting rifles. Their population had grown to such proportions that there was a risk: by crossing the border unhindered, they could inspire men to do the same.

These days, rabbits are more likely to be spotted in one of the city's largest parks, such as Humboldthain or Tiergarten. But there is still one other place where some 120 rabbits roam around freely: the old border post between Wedding to the west and Mitte to the east.

By installing gleaming brass silhouettes of rabbits in the asphalt near number 61 ChausseestraÙe, artist Karla Sachse paid a special tribute in 1999 to these long-standing trans-border critters. There were initially many more of these little silhouettes, but rapid urbanisation (always a threat to art in public spaces) meant the brass rabbits ended up sharing the same fate as their organic cousins – in large cities, their numbers have also dwindled considerably, despite the ongoing efforts of the artist's friends.

## ANIMAL ANATOMICAL THEATRE ⑦

### *Elevator to the final act*

Philippsstraße 12–13, 10115 Berlin  
 Tue–Sat: 2pm–6pm  
 U6 (Oranienburger Tor)



**H**idden away in the Charité, Berlin's university hospital, the animal anatomical theatre is an impressive building built in 1790 by Carl Gotthard Langhans, who found his inspiration in Andrea Palladio's Villa Rotonda in Italy. The bull skulls among the bas-reliefs over the outer windows hint at the building's purpose.

This type of theatre emerged across Europe to satisfy the growing interest in surgery and the human body. Berlin already had the anatomical theatre of the Collegium Medico-Chirurgicum, located since 1713 in the nearby Charité building complex. However, demonstrations performed on human bodies were not sufficient to meet the needs of the army: to the ruling class, animals used for military purposes – mainly horses and bulls – were just as important as soldiers. Therefore, in order for veterinarians to acquire the necessary knowledge, a second theatre dedicated to the dissection of animals was built.

Nowadays, Berlin's human anatomical theatre and the original building of the Charité complex no longer exist, but the building still referred to in German as 'TAT' gives an authentic idea of what these theatres were like. At the entrance, a small permanent exhibition details the history of the building and its architectural elements. Markings in the middle of the floor outline the area where the manually operated elevator hoisted the dead animals. And in addition to the particularly steep tiers of seats, the main attraction of the auditorium is its domed ceiling and the remarkable animal-themed grisaille paintings found there.

Since 2012, the Hermann von Helmholtz Center for Cultural Techniques (HKZ) uses the 'TAT' as an innovative exhibition showroom and a centre for exchanges between scientific culture and the practice of exhibition making.

In contrast to the many human anatomical theatres (there are eight in Germany alone), there were only half a dozen animal anatomical theatres across the whole of Europe.

For more information about the theatres see the following double-page spread.

## FOYER OF THE BERLIN COURTHOUSE

9

*Incredible architecture inside and out*

Littenstraße 12–17, 10179 Berlin  
 Mon–Fri 9am–1pm; ID card required  
 U2 (Klosterstraße)



While the *Landgericht Berlin* (Berlin Regional Court) courthouse may not be a secret, few are aware that it houses one of the most beautiful interiors in the city.

After security checks at the entrance on Littenstraße (a passport or ID card is required here), visitors are treated to a spectacular sight: a 30.5 metre-high circular foyer richly adorned with eclectic decorations. A sandstone colonnade with shades of red and green surrounds a large central space. Columns on the ground floor and two spiral staircases are embellished with colourful drawings of knights in armour bearing shields. The terracotta floors are decorated with different types of tiles, many of which date back to when the building was built and represent the coats of arms of the royal crown. Twisting figures typical of *Jugendstil* (Art Nouveau) make up the white wrought iron railings of the staircases and balconies, while elsewhere the banisters are decorated with Rococo motifs.

Head upstairs for a closer look at the magnificent chandelier hanging in the middle of the room, and the decorative ceiling arches whose shape and colour recall the canons of Gothic architecture. Measuring nearly 1,000 square metres in total, the foyer can be viewed in all its glory from the upper floors.

Construction work led by architects Paul Thoemer, Rudolf Mönnich and Otto Schmalz began in 1896, and the building was inaugurated in 1904 (written above the entrance gate). The building was intended to house the Civil Chamber of the Berlin Regional Court and the High Court of Mitte. With a total of five kilometres of corridors and 3,000 windows, it used to be one of the biggest buildings in the city. Its façade follows the Baroque style common throughout Southern Germany, with two square towers neatly framing the building on the side of Neue Friedrichstraße (now Littenstraße).

The courthouse suffered serious damage during the bombings of the Second World War and was largely rebuilt during the post-war era. Although not at all damaged, an entire wing of the building was demolished in 1968-69 to create a street: Grunerstraße. During the years of separation, the building was also the GDR's Supreme Court.

Today, several Civil Chambers of the High Court are located at this address, along with the Berlin Regional Court, the largest court in Germany by number of employees.

## THE STAINED-GLASS WINDOWS OF THE CHURCH ON THE HOHENZOLLERNPLATZ

③

*An exceptional choreography of dancing light*

Nassauische Straße 66-67, 10717 Berlin

Tue & Thur 2pm-6pm, Wed & Fri 11am-1pm, Sat 1pm-3pm and for events  
and during services

A liturgy is sung every Saturday at midday

U2, 3 (Hohenzollernplatz)



Built between 1930 and 1933 from plans drawn by Ossip Klarwein, the assistant of the famous German architect Fritz Höger, the Kirche am Hohenzollernplatz (the church on Hohenzollernplatz) is no secret in itself with its 66-metre-high steeple. But who, apart from the parishioners, has ever visited its exceptional interiors? The church is effectively one of the most interesting examples of expressionist architecture in Berlin. A beautiful example of *Backsteinexpressionismus* (Brick Expressionism), an architectural style that is typical of Northern Germany and of which Höger is one of the main representatives, the church hides an interior (40 metres long and 20 metres high) with 13 lined-up, pointed arches, built in reinforced concrete, one of the emblematic materials of both Höger and German architectural expressionism.

The effect of the light coming through the stained glass windows on the sides and the huge stained glass window behind the altar is remarkable: shades of yellow, red and blue are reflected on the pale surface of the cement arches, adding to the mystical atmosphere of the place.

This extraordinary choreography of dancing light and shadows could not be seen when the church was first built in the 1930s. On 22 November 1943, the Kirche am Hohenzollernplatz was severely damaged during Allied bombing: the original organ, the frescos and the paintings were almost all destroyed during the fire which followed. The church was rebuilt after the war and has been a listed building since 1966. The marvellous stained-glass windows are the work of the German artist Achim Freyer, who made them as part of a vast renovation programme carried out in the years 1990-1991.



Every Saturday at midday, during 'NoonSong', a liturgy is sung by a professional choir.

## THE WEDDING SAND DUNE

①

### *A very secret sand dune*

Scharnweberstraße 158, 13405 Berlin

*Dune visible from the car park of the neighbouring DIY store, or by prior booking: [bgmitte@nabu-berlin.de](mailto:bgmitte@nabu-berlin.de)*

*U6 (Afrikanische Straße or Kurt-Schumacher-Platz)*



On the SUZ (gardening school) site with its educational gardens, on the edge of the Rehberge park, there is an intriguing, secret sand dune that can be visited if booked in advance.

It was formed around the end of a glacial period called the Weichselian, or Vistulian, as it takes its name from the Vistulia river. When the last glaciers disappeared from this era around 12,000 years ago, they left behind large zones scattered with fallen rocks, moraines and sandbanks. The vegetation slowly began to take root, allowing the wind to blow the sand around freely, spreading much of it over the surrounding area and forming it into dunes.

Over the millennia, human intervention has caused vegetation to become denser with, for example, the planting of hedges to protect meadows and fields. In the 18th century, the systematic planting of dunes took place at the same time as the extraction of sand reduced the number of inland dunes.

Luckily, the plans for the Friedrich-Ebert-Siedlung workers' housing, which was supposed to be built here in 1929, were shelved. The Wedding dune therefore remained intact until it was partly integrated into the gardening school in 1950. In 1976, the area was registered as a protected natural site before a global conservation and development plan was drawn up at the end of the 1980s.

In 2002, the Wedding dune was given extra protection when the atypical vegetation of brambles and beeches was removed. Only the original types of dune vegetation, Scots pines and oaks, were left to flourish. The undying commitment of the German Federation for the Protection of Nature (NABU) in Berlin, has gradually given the dune its initial appearance back. Invasive plants are now systematically removed, and the layer of humus, which is 40 cm thick in some places, is also regularly reduced.

The dune can be partially seen from the car park of the neighbouring DIY store, but for a closer look at the oldest mound of sand from the glacial period in Berlin-Mitte, volunteers can join the NABU group of Berlin-Mitte to help maintain the dune.

## MUSEUM OF LETTERS

*An incredible museum of 3-D letters*

Stadtbahnbogen 424, 10557 Berlin

0 177 4 20 15 87

[buchstabenmuseum.de](http://buchstabenmuseum.de)

Thur–Sun 1pm–5pm

S3, 5, 7, 9 (Bellevue)

⑥



Founded in 2005 by Viennese designer Barbara Dechant and art curator Anja Schulze, the Buchstabenmuseum is undoubtedly one of the most original museums in Berlin. The rooms of this incredible place showcase more than 2,000 three-dimensional letters and signage from various periods, the majority of them having been found in the German capital and the surrounding area.

The museum is the first in the world to collect letters that once belonged in public spaces and to present them as integral elements of urban history. Each piece on show has undergone thorough research to locate and document its origin, and sometimes even establish its date of production. Alongside the letters are fact sheets providing information on the typography used, dimensions, the date of the letters' discovery, and the materials used to create them.

Some rare finds – particularly the four large letters (H, A, U and P) that once formed the signage of the Berlin *Ostbahnhof* station, which used to be called the *Hauptbahnhof* – tell a story of 19th-century Berlin. The glitzy letters of the word *Zierfische* ('ornamental fish'), a historic shop that existed from 1957 until 2009 near the Frankfurter Tor, can be found on one wall; another room features the huge metal letters and integrated neon lights of the former headquarters of the daily newspaper *Tagesspiegel* on Potsdamer Straße.

The location of the museum is itself rather unusual. Since 2016, the exhibits gathered by Barbara Dechant and Anja Schulze have been kept in a Stadtbahnbogen, a viaduct under the rail tracks of the S-Bahn. Although this is not the only place of its kind in Berlin, its location near the Bellevue S-Bahn, away from the flow of tourists, and the amazing way in which the underground tunnels have been refurbished, make this a must-see place, located just a few steps from the equally interesting Hansa district.



# KREUZKIRCHE

17

## *An expressionist masterpiece*

Hohenzollerndamm 130a, 14199 Berlin

0 30 / 83 22 46 63

kreuzkirche-berlin.de

Sat 4pm–6pm and Sunday mass at 11am

S41 (Hohenzollerndamm)



Rare are the Berliners, and even more so the tourists, who have been inside the listed Kreuzkirche church, which is a real pity: built between 1927 and 1929, from plans drawn by Günther Paulus, it is a masterpiece of expressionist architecture.

Other than its three-pointed steeple, which can be seen from afar (54 metres high), the church has a surprising front door – in blue ceramic, reminiscent of an Asian pagoda.

On either side of the door, on the sides of the main tower, it is interesting to note the zigzag of decorations (in brick), typical of expressionist architecture. Partially rebuilt after the war in 1953, the church was renovated in 1984, respecting the original plans as faithfully as possible. Inside, a corridor leads to a remarkable main hall (octagonally-shaped) whose exceptional decor painted behind the altar is also typical of expressionism.

The original colours, created by Erich Wolde, corresponded to those of a rainbow: the entrance (*Brauthalle*) in yellow, the corridor in red, the main hall in green, the pews for the worshippers in blue (the only original colour that remains today) and the area around the altar in purple.

The harmony and architectural balance which flows from this place is definitely worth taking in for a moment on the pews of this church.



## NEARBY

Walking up the Hohenzollerndamm towards the S-Bahn, the front door of the parish offices, some 10 metres away to the left of the main entrance to the church, is also endowed with fantastic expressionist decor.

TOM WOLF, MANUEL ROY AND ROBERTO SASSI



# SECRET

# BERLIN

An amphitheatre where animals were dissected, a sand dune hidden in a town centre, the oldest forgotten remains of the Berlin Wall in Pankow, the outstanding interior of an Expressionist church, a building which is a copy of the Farnese Palace in Rome, the remains of a camp for those in transit between the West and East, a concrete construction weighing 12,000 tonnes built to measure the solidity of the ground, a shining performance in the chapel of a cemetery, an unknown masterpiece of brutalist architecture, the man-made hill where the aviation pioneer Otto Lilienthal did his first test flights, a street that closes from 10pm to 6am to protect beavers ...

Far from the madding crowds and the usual clichés, Berlin remains full of hidden treasures that can only be seen by locals and travellers who bother to wander off the beaten track.

An essential guide for those who thought they knew Berlin, or for those who wish to discover the city's other side.

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