



Suddenly Wonderful Visions for chunky 1970's architecture in West Berlin

26.5. – 18.9.23

During the Cold War, some notable big buildings went up in West Berlin as new sites for research, education and cultural activity. They include the International Congress Centre (ICC Berlin, 1973–1979), also known as the “Battleship Charlottenburg”, the erstwhile Institute of Hygiene and Microbiology (1969–1974) and the former Central Animal Labs, nicknamed “Mäusebunker”, at the Freie Universität Berlin in Lichterfelde (1971–1981), and the tower restaurant in Steglitz better known as the “Bierpinsel”. While they made their mark on the urban landscape by dint of their sheer size, the popular nicknames coined by residents have likewise set their stamp on local parlance.

West Berlin's monuments to high-tech modernism

With their futuristic shapes, functional complexity and novel façades, these buildings symbolised a contemporary belief in progress. They were also intended to show the world that the walled-off half-city remained a competitive force. And yet they were criticised from the outset as ugly and inefficient. Today, after years of neglect and now technologically obsolete, they are regularly threatened with demolition.

But that destiny is being increasingly challenged by academics, artists and politicians who value these architectures as impressive monuments to the high-tech modernism of the West. By singling out a number of examples, this exhibition turns the spotlight on these debates and on efforts to preserve and revitalise this historical and cultural heritage.

Blueprints by reputed architects

On show are blueprints by reputed architects and planners based in Berlin, all of whom appreciate the existing buildings: as valuable resources in pursuit of the energy transition and as places that generate a sense of identity for residents and users. The practice of these teams derives from recognising the potential for new uses in existing architectural structures.

ICC

The team at GRAFT, for example, have proposed converting the ICC into a research and development hub for e-mobility. Theirs is a response both to the present structure and to a major challenge of our times.

The same applies to the blueprint from Roland Böving and Christina Neuner. Aware that this huge building has always been criticised for its enormous energy consumption, they want to cloak it in a biosphere that will make it a carbon-free zone and to enhance its inhospitable setting with an abundance of greenery.

Something Fantastic and Bureau N are keen to preserve the ICC as a total art work that blends architecture, design and technology and to upgrade it for the 21st century: apart from art and culture, there would be room here for a server farm (according to Niklas Maak's „Servermanifest“) – an infrastructure for the digital age from which all Berlin could benefit, with waste heat channelled back into the building's energy supply.

“Mäusebunker”

Blueprints for converting the “Mäusebunker” are currently being devised by both the private and the public sector. 60 experts from different fields have been assessing the future potential for this challenging structure in a model procedure initiated by Berlin's Heritage Authority in partnership with the Charité teaching hospital and the Senate Department for Urban Development, Building and Housing. The process and the findings are on show here for the first time.

The team at b+ (bplus.xyz) have also been exploring ways to save the “mouse bunker”. They are seeking to turn a building that once



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symbolised human domination over the natural world into a prototype for architecture where people and nature can coexist. This means breaking open a building that had been hermetically sealed for functional reasons, with big windows to replace the grid-like concrete façade.

This exhibition brings together new ideas with designs, technical drawings and films from the museum's collection, some never displayed before. They tell the story of how these buildings were conceived and created. Works by artists such as Kay Fingerle, Beate Gütschow, Matthias Hoch and Tracey Snelling contribute a present-day take on these striking icons of the 1970s. There are some 85 works on show by about 20 architectural and planning practices, photographers and artists.

Artists:

Bernhard Boës (1931-2011), Jennifer Bulla (*1989), Patrick Huth (*1985), Ulrich Conrads (1923-2013), Peter Cürlis (1924-2013), Nathan Eddy (*1984), Kay Fingerle, Reinhard Friedrich (1928-2014), Andreas Gehrke (*1975), Beate Gütschow (*1970), Matthias Hoch (*1958), Frank Oehring (*1939), Tracey Snelling (*1970)

Architects, architecture offices and others:

Barkow Leibinger (est. 1993), Roland Böving (*1962), Bureau N (est. 2008), b+ (bplus.xyz) (est. 2022), Fehling+Gogel (1953-1990), GRAFT Architekten (est. 1998), G+M Hänska (1962-1973), Kleihues + Kleihues (est. 1996), J. Mayer H. (est. 1996), Christina Neuner (*1983), Kurt Schmiersow, Schüler & Schüler Witte (1967-2007), Something Fantastic (est. 2010), s+ (station.plus), IEA, D-ARCH, ETH Zürich, Landesdenkmalamt Berlin in cooperation with Charité Universitätsmedizin and the Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, Bauen und Wohnen. Realisation of the exhibition contribution: Forward Planung und Forschung, Ludwig Heimbach Architektur, Make_Shift

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Online tickets

bg.berlin/en/tickets

Press images

berlinischegalerie.de/en/press-release/suddenly-wonderful

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Berlinische Galerie

Berlin's Museum of Modern Art,
Photography and Architecture

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Admission 10 €, concessions 6 €

Wed – Mon 10 am – 6 pm

Tue closed