

Ares Kalandides (ed.)

BERLIN

DESIGN

BRAUN

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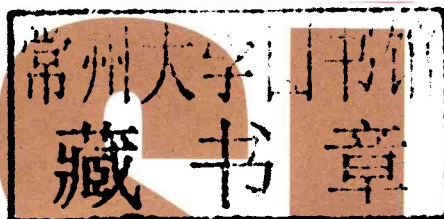
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Berlin...

by Ares Kalandides

The announcement of Berlin's appointment as a "UNESCO City of Design" in early 2006 let loose a wave of euphoria which could be hardly contained. Overnight, without the advertising professionals having to construct an image for it, Berlin became a brand. Any qualms that the city might have had about this new identity dissipated quickly, overshadowed by the realization that a new economic sector with immense future prospects has been identified. Yes, Berliners are »poor but sexy«, but soon, our creative economy just might make us even sexier and less poor! This prophecy has become a self-fulfilling one: Berlin is creative, therefore creative people move to Berlin; it follows that you are creative because you live in Berlin. Here, life and work has fashioned itself into the epitome of creativity. But, all jokes aside, there still remains a legitimate question: Why Berlin, and not London, Paris or Milan? It seems obvious to have included these established centers of design into the UNESCO cre-

in order to help support their efforts to use their own creativity for economic progress". It is the newcomers, not the establishment, who are of interest to the network. By accepting the UNESCO title, Berlin has committed itself to be not only a partner, but also a mentor.

Thus, the title "Berlin, UNESCO City of Design" symbolizes both recognition and responsibility; but as is often the case, recognition is gladly accepted and often touted, while the commitment to take design seriously is quickly forgotten. This obligation implies seeing design for what it is - as more than simply decoration, but a certain way of observing things, of understanding them in order to take them apart and present anew. Design is not synonymous with luxury, but is a way of finding our place in this world, of bringing some measure of order to the chaos. Good design means understanding exactly what is required by merely looking at an office form. Good design means quickly finding what you are searching for on a web-

» Design is not synonymous with luxury, but is a way of finding our place in this world «

ative cities' network. However, neither the quality nor the quantity of creative production played a role in the selection. Founded in 2004, the network was established as part of the "Global Alliance for Cultural Diversity", which focuses on developing countries. The "Creative Cities" program interconnects cities wishing to exchange experiences, ideas and best practices. "Creative metropolises should pass on their experiences to cities in developing countries

site. Good design means enjoying the act of sitting and finding pleasure in your living and work spaces. Good design encourages learning and makes us more creative. Good design is a functional orientation system which leads one through the confusing space of a modern airport. Good design means finding your way in an urban environment with the help of directive aids. Certainly, a city which desires to be a design city, must truly heed its designers.

...City of Design

Immediately following Berlin's admission to the UNESCO network, 15 of the city's companies affiliated with the field of design joined forces to consider ways in which they can breathe life into this title. This led to the formation of the CREATE BERLIN network which, as of mid-2009, has over 100 design-related member companies. CREATE BERLIN sets three main objectives for itself: a) to connect designers to each other, b) to act as a bridge between designers and politicians, scientists and potential clients, and finally c) to help distinguish Berlin as a UNESCO City of Design. Thanks to cooperative projects, design exhibitions and fairs organized by the network, Berlin's design has traveled the world over, finding admirers from Tokyo to New York and from London to Singapore.

What is so special about Berlin, and what can other cities learn from it? It would be presumptuous to suggest that Berlin simply does it better than others. Still, the city has certainly followed its own path in design, and it is worthwhile to examine and trace it back to the beginning. This book wishes to contribute to this goal by presenting a slice of the variety that makes up Berlin's design. Two theoretical and practical questions present themselves at this point, which I would like to address: According to the 2008 report by the Ministry of Culture, circa 2,400 design companies are active in Berlin, and in 2006 alone they were responsible for a total revenue of around 380 million Euro. Selecting fewer than a hundred from among these for presentation in this book seems like an impossible, and also a highly questionable task.

For this reason, we have consciously cast all objectivity aside and invited eight Berlin designers to pick their favorites. This curatorial team is responsible for the selection and quality of the entries included in this volume. Of all cities, Berlin represents the idea of interdisciplinary approach especially well. Here, boundaries are crossed, clear divisions are blurred, ruptures are healed, and creative thinking is rewarded. The second question to emerge asks what system could be devised to classify the contents of this book and help the reader explore it in a coherent fashion? Doesn't categorization itself contradict Berlin's constant transgression of bounds? To address this, we have reduced the number of represented areas to four, and bundled together those that stray outside of clear delineation. Between the extremes of structure and freedom, we have decided in favor of a readable middle ground.

We would like to extend a big thank you to the curators, who have taken on the task of evaluating a total of more than 200 entries, to Betty Myller, who persistently reminded the notoriously unpunctual designer crowd about approaching deadlines, and especially the designers themselves, whose work is the subject of this book. This publication's main purpose is to bring enjoyment and to intensify interest in the scene. Turning these pages, please keep in mind that real Berlin design isn't found in this book, but in Berlin itself.

Designers' Spaces

by Bastian Lange

Design is to define space, reads the sticker on the door of Pfadfinderei (the Path Finders), a design agency who obviously see their task as finding new conduits in physical space. For these champions of the club-related scene, space is the main object of their design explorations - they stage club locations, exhibition halls and virtual spaces in new ways with the help of acoustic systems. Music rhythms are translated into characters and symbols and synchronously projected on walls. Space is brought into movement, dissolves and turns upside down, transplanting the club's atmosphere into a different world.

Pfadfinderei are representative of the young generation of urban entrepreneurs, who in turn characterize Berlin. Urban, because they are busy exploring the city's unique landscape in artistic, creative or business ways; Entrepreneurs, because their work represents a new generation of young people who maintain their own version of reality. These 'culturepreneurs' form a completely new field. In the course of

on space and suggest new styles of communications: in short, they want to be different and express this, among other means, through space.

Due to its culturally open, economically and politically uncultivated context, Berlin revealed itself as a well-suited environment for this development. To this day, these movers and shakers see their city as a space that is for them to define. The pure delight in participating in this game of style and interpretive sovereignty contributed to the influx of creative men and women to Berlin in immense numbers. From the early 1990s on, the city has been known the world over as a laboratory for new experience-based dance, club and music styles staged in a permanently shifting, unfinished, and therefore negotiable space. These activities were carried out in their full scope and intensity in the slipstream of the region's hopes for economic and demographic growth. Activities with no known precedent were free to unfold and form their own cultures in alternating places around the city. Specifically,

» The city as an experimental space «

the expansion of new media and technology, various activity and employment domains in the so-called 'creative industries (to which design business belongs) took shape, sustained by the arrival of young talent from around the world. These creative carrier groups work in the culture and services professions in mostly intangible fields. In doing so, they represent new work- and lifestyles, pose a different demand

the unregulated industrial wasteland and empty residential spaces motivated and opened these new forms of utilization. Countless participants and players sensed and recognized the city as an experimental space which they could use to their own ends. Economic procedure, however, found its way into the fabric of these new cultural and experience-based communal processes at a very early stage.

With meager financial means, a business and a club could be established under an »Art Gallery« sign. Professional fields developed from improvised party cultures, based less on specific qualifications or social background than on individual talent and self-assertion. Individual agents acting in loose networks were from the start subject to new flexible patterns. They represented individualized and entrepreneurial survival strategies, which since 1998 have been portrayed by politicians and the society in positive light.

Last but not least, the statement accompanying the UNESCO "City of Design" title mentions the city's "environment" and its "space" as providing excellent conditions for creative work and the manufacture of innovative products. This "environment" also happens to include the design-oriented courses of higher education offered in the city and attended by circa 5,000 students. UNESCO's explanation of its grounds states that creative economy and innovative force are indeed Berlin's unique characteristics. This distinction equally recognizes the significance of a culture-oriented economy which is supported by micro-enterprises and individual businessmen.

These entrepreneurs offer their experience and semantic knowledge to other service providers and thus act as a bridge between the usually independently operating subsystems of business and culture. They play a central role in the transmission of knowledge, styles and information within creative communities. Moreover, they never operate alone, but always work in information networks set up with the help of

communications. Each addition to these sets of contacts opens new possibilities for employment and commissions. Locations become communication platforms, where creative communities are formed and social participation takes place.

Design world entrepreneurs need Berlin as a space for atmospheric and symbolic recharging of their own business identity as well as that of their emerging products. They are part of Berlin's artistic milieu and they require this symbolism; but they also need the knowledge capital necessary for profitable product placement. These entrepreneurs not only need Berlin because Berlin and its various scenes are seen as a creative place, but they must also make themselves recognizable as Berliners. This all boils down to the fact culturepreneurs are dependent on Berlin's geo-symbolic assets, and just as they are in a position to reflexively capitalize on them as part of their business strategy, they also simultaneously add to their worth. That's why Berlin design sells around the world under the slogan "Made in Berlin". Is Berlin a city with an entrepreneurial spirit? Yes, Berlin definitely has entrepreneurial and pioneering spirit - new culturepreneurs have a strong relation to the urban context that surrounds them. Formally, this might also be the order of business in such cities as Hamburg, London, Paris and Munich, but the physical form is created here in a manner absolutely intrinsic to Berlin - place matters! In Berlin, the practice of design is construed according to its own rules, processes and narratives. And this is exactly what makes this city special.

Fashion Design

by Christophe Carbon
Manager of Galeries Lafayette

In 1996, when Galeries Lafayette first arrived to Berlin, the former garment industry metropolis was no longer a big name in fashion. Only a slight trace of nostalgia reminded of the long-gone glorious days of the 1920s. In the course of the last few years, this state of things has drastically changed.

In the meantime, Berlin has come to host two big fashion fairs, at least one of which has a war-ranted claim to call itself the most important in Europe. Berlin has finally attained the glamour of a Fashion Week with countless fashion shows in its city center, drawing stars from all over the world. Nowhere else in the country do fashion events of this scale take place. Although many brands still have their showrooms in Düsseldorf, even in this respect the change can be felt. If a label wants to show itself as stylish, dynamic and in tune with the times, it

has positively responded to a new idea or brand. In the last ten years, the neighborhoods of Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg have added more ateliers and boutiques by young fashion designers than any other German city. It can be safely said that the times of designers stitching TV tower t-shirts on their home sewing machines are over.

Berlin is now known as the place where many designers have not only secured their own existence, but also established outstanding careers. Trend scouts from around the globe come to Berlin to observe the Mitte fashion scene and pick out the best. International press has also caught on to the style pulse of Berlin-Mitte.

New professions, ones that didn't even exist a mere ten years ago, have formed around the designer milieu. The Berlin fashion world is innervated by fashion photographers, stylists, PR agencies and showroom operators. Even

» Berlin on the fashion-capital track «

does so by opening a showroom in Berlin. The Osthafen showroom project is a testament to this fact. Much has also changed on the retail floors: Although retail spaces are still concentrated in the western part of the city, in the past decade the east has revealed itself as the perfect platform for new labels. Luxury boutiques like Louis Vuitton, Gucci or Escada have long since established themselves along Friedrichstrasse. The area surrounding the Hackeschen Markt has proven to be a fitting location for many international brands to roll out creative shop concepts. The test phase is considered a success when the local consumer

the supply of fashion designers has been secured: eight fashion schools now operate here. In this respect, Berlin beats all records.

But how did Berlin begin to attract people as a fashion hub? After the wall fell, the metropolis presented itself spectacularly open to everything that was new, creative and unconventional at the time. After 1989, the city had many vacant gaps which had to be filled; these provided affordable spaces for movement and play. The incompleteness of a city like Berlin attracted creative people from all corners of the world. Many companies relocated their operations here, motivated

by the desire to embody the image of a creative business. This constellation of events collected momentum and created specialized work environments such as the BERLINOMAT, »Creative Agency for Designers«.

Berlin is a truly unique laboratory for fashion experiments, one which is fueled by and gains from the city's constantly changing nature. Fashion created here is a contemporary interpretation of Berlin's culture and history, mixed with every known movement. Berlin brands address all target groups and are positioned across the entire width of the market's spectrum. For example, Scherer&Gonzales cater to the chic, stately woman with their beautiful evening gowns. Penkov and Macqua dress the urban citizen of the world. Smeiliner puts forth romantic creations for individualists, and Miroike makes offbeat shoes that quicken the hearts of all design-obsessed. Avant-garde fashion can be found in c.neon stores, and elegance is in supply at presque fini.

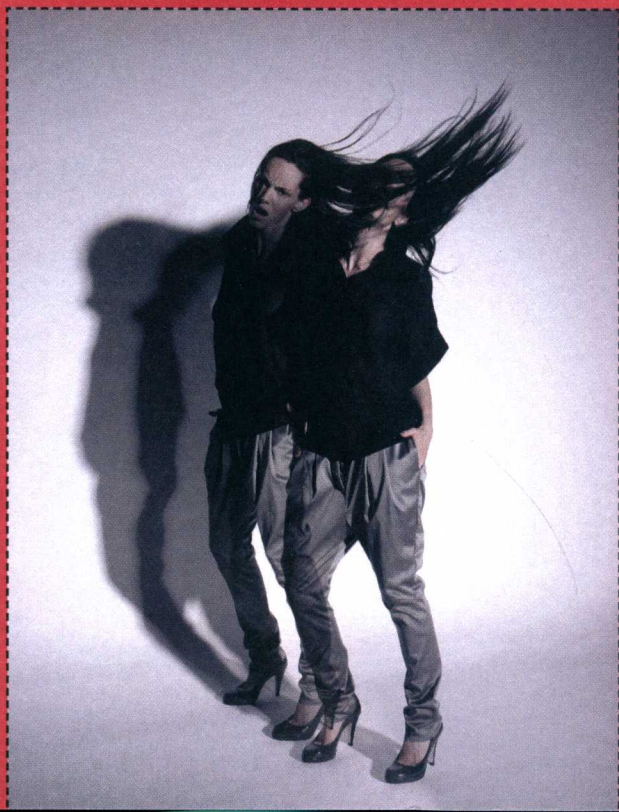
Berlin still has everything to gain. The designers are there, they have professional collections and well-known retailers as clients, but the next decade will show who will indeed succeed to become an international name in fashion. That is what remains in the way of Berlin hoisting itself into the league of fashion cities like Paris.

esther perbandt

The label esther perbandt stands for diversity. The designer simultaneously develops a rigorous, yet sensitive approach to her individual style. Her collections seek the symbiosis and harmony between dualities of material, color, and stylistic elements. Many pieces have a boyish basecut, which later acquires a feminine effect through the use of additional components. Stemming from the designer's worldwide experiences, the collections boast an international character: They captivate with quality and timeless panache.



» I design fashions for women who, at least once in their lives, have pondered whether it would have been better to have been born a man. «



Summer collection 2009

The geometrical lines and cross-bracings of countless cranes in the construction-ridden Beijing skyline reminded the designer of origami cranes and inspired her 2009 summer collection. In reference to her experience, she made geometrically-inspired basic shapes and let structured models emerge from these, which she then combined with flowing silhouettes. She created struts and braces from various colored cloths and other materials and overlaid these on the base designs. Water-streaked soft-PVC strips reference the crane structures and were used for different pocket shapes. They create the dual effect of adding a second layer to the garment and showing contrast to the fine silk material used.

PHOTOS: SEBASTIAN STOTTELE



lala Berlin

lala
BERLIN

lala Berlin, the design label from Leyla Piedayesh, has become one of the best-known and most successful new German fashion labels in the space of just a few years with its casual urban knits made from luxury materials. In the mean time, the ready-to-wear collections include not only cool high-end jerseys, but also jackets, coats, pants, blouses, skirts as well as elegant evening wear and stand-out accessories.

» lala Berlin doesn't only mean looking good, but also feeling great. «

Fall/winter collection 2009/2010

The collection plays with contrasts between rough knits and delicate silks. Detailed and light dresses are combined with casual cardigans sewn from a patchwork of various high-quality threads. Trappers' lifestyle and the Western genre were the source of Leyla Piedayesh's inspiration. Leather details, mixed materials and fur textures interpret the topic in a subtle way and are supplemented using unique saloon-girl print motifs and snakeskin.



PHOTOS: DIRK MERTEN

