

Project description

Experience history, remember the past, debate the present – and look to the future.

On the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the Peaceful Revolution and the fall of the Wall, Berlin will be transformed **from 4 – 10 November 2019** into an open-air festival venue at seven locations that are inextricably linked to the Revolution. These sites were chosen to commemorate key events in the overthrow of the SED regime, the courage of those who opposed the dictatorship, and the dawn of a new and democratic era.

For seven days over the course of the festival week, the story of the Peaceful Revolution and the fall of the Wall will be brought to life at the places where it unfolded:

From the processes that led to the formation of the East German opposition, which is addressed at **Gethsemane Church**, to the largest protest demonstration on 4 November 1989 on **Alexanderplatz**, to the scenes of joy at the **Brandenburg Gate** following the opening of the Wall. Equally important are the first encounters between West and East Berliners on **Kurfürstendamm**. Elsewhere, the festival will commemorate the occupation of the **Stasi Headquarters** in Lichtenberg on 15 January 1990, which finally deprived the SED of its most important instrument of power, and – in what was probably the greatest success of the Peaceful Revolution – the first free elections and the subsequent establishment of the first freely-elected parliament in GDR history, which will be examined on **Schlossplatz**, the current site of the Humboldt Forum. At its final station, the iconic **East Side Gallery**, the festival will highlight this symbolic act of cultural appropriation.

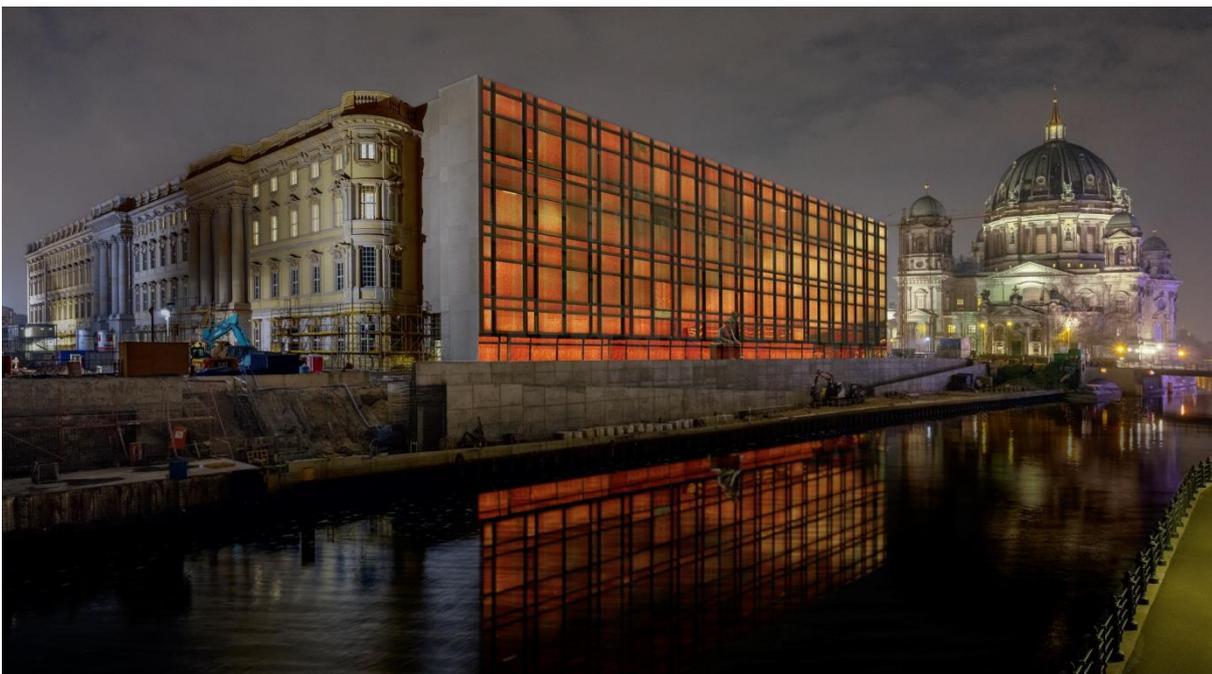
The intertwining of a variety of formats facilitates a very special encounter with history at each of the original locations:

Exhibitions will highlight the historical background at each site, providing the theoretical foundation for an artistic examination of the events of 1989/90 using **3D video projections**. A diverse and varied programme of events will also address these topics, creating a link to the present – with **contemporary witness accounts**, panel discussions, readings, **film series, concerts**, poetry slams, a film project involving young people, the **MauAR app, and a participative art installation**. The evening of the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Wall will be celebrated with a large stage show at the Brandenburg Gate.

During the festival week, Berlin will honour the victims of the deadly border regime and all other victims of the Communist dictatorship, and pay tribute to the courage and strength of all those who brought about the fall of the Wall and the collapse of the SED regime, and who paved the way for a democratic society in the GDR. The festival week will celebrate the successes of the Peaceful Revolution, recall the joy of gaining freedom, and commemorate the risks and tribulations that accompanied this social upheaval. The endeavours of individuals, along with international support, made it possible to overcome the division of Berlin and prepare the path towards German unification.

The artistic discourse: 3D video projections on key sites

The past will become particularly tangible as large-scale **3D video projections** combining **images, animations and sound effects** at the festival venues enable visitors to immerse themselves in the events of 1989 and 1990. At **Alexanderplatz**, for example, the wishes, hopes and demands of the hundreds of thousands of demonstrators who boldly defied the SED leadership here on 4 November 1989 can be experienced anew. At the **Humboldt Forum**, the historical façade of the former parliamentary building – the Palast der Republik – will be visible again, and the important stages and events on the road to a democratic GDR will be illuminated.



© Kulturprojekte Berlin, photo by Harf Zimmermann

The historical foundation: Exhibitions at seven locations

For 40 years, the SED maintained its grip on power in the GDR by deploying the tools of repression and isolation. The regime's demise was complex and abrupt, surprising many. This development, which was both fortuitous and historically significant, was borne by the courage of all those who refused to continue living under the rule of the SED and forms the focal point of the exhibition programme.

What happened between the summer of 1989, when public awareness of the protests against the SED regime grew steadily as people fled East Germany, and mid-March 1990, when East German citizens were allowed to cast their vote in democratic elections for the first and only time? What preceded these developments, and what were the consequences? And what role did events in Berlin play? The exhibitions address these questions and examine the historical background to the events of 1989/90 at each of the seven locations.

The events will be presented using texts and images at each location, allowing visitors to delve into history in accordance with their own personal interests.

The recollections of contemporary witnesses will render the exhibition's **narrative** even more palpable. Their stories were collected and curated in a **large interview project**, to be integrated as essential elements into the exhibitions, using quotes and listening stations. Those interviewed include civil rights leaders, unknown participants in opposition activities, observers of events from West and East Berlin, immigrants, church representatives, individuals who left legally and others who fled, as well as victims of the Stasi and artists.

The project will effectively serve as an instrument for education and communication, composed of **seven exhibitions** spread across the city, reflecting both the relationships between each of the sites and the **diversity of topics**: from global and European contexts to local events, from the long history of resistance to the Communist dictatorships to the role of the Western media in the fall of the Wall, from the many different ruptures and transformations of the 1990s to the perspective of immigrants.

Memory, reflection and discussion: The programme of events

The festival programme comprises well over one hundred events, including numerous concerts, such as “Mauern werden einstürzen” with **Patti Smith** and **Tony Shanahan** at **Gethsemane Church** and the programme “Erinnerung” at the Pierre Boulez Saal. There will be other concerts by **Die Seilschaft** and **the Bolschewistische Kurkapelle Schwarz-Rot**. Plays such as “Krokodil im Nacken”, a staging of the Klaus Kordon book for young people and adults, and **Die Schwäne vom Schlachthof** in cooperation with the **Maxim Gorki Theatre** are examples of the wide-ranging theatre programme.

The festival will also feature numerous workshops, film screenings, readings, contemporary witness accounts and discussions with journalists, historians and politicians, as well as tours of the city’s history – a programme for a story that is as varied and diverse as the voices telling it.

The evening of 9 November at the Brandenburg Gate

The evening of the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Wall will be celebrated with a large stage show. The **Staatskapelle**, conducted by **Daniel Barenboim**, will open the show, which will also feature people involved in the Peaceful Revolution, contemporary witnesses, musicians, performers, as well as individuals who take a stand and inspire courage today. Finally, **WestBam** will ring in the Clubcommission’s **European Club Night**, with dance parties in 27 clubs throughout Berlin.

The Wall in 3D: Augmented reality app MauAR

The innovative augmented reality app MauAR visualises the division of Berlin along the Wall from 1961 to 1989. The app presents users with a **3D model, true to the original**, in the camera view of their smartphone or tablet. By means of texts, audio and video, the wall comes alive along its original length of around 160 kilometres. **Five special episodes** developed on the occasion of the festival week recount the events at the historical sites. Among them: a virtual experience of the demonstration held on Alexanderplatz on 4 November 1989. MauAR can be downloaded free of charge at www.mauar.berlin.



© Art installation: Patrick Shearn of Poetic Kinetics, curated by Kulturprojekte Berlin

30 000 messages in an art installation at the Brandenburg Gate

Following the banners that were borne during the demonstrations of the Peaceful Revolution, this September all Berliners and guests of the city are invited to share their own **messages, wishes and hopes** for the future or their memories of the past. These special ribbons will be integrated into a large-scale **art installation, known as a Skynet by Patrick Shearn of Poetic Kinetics**, that will float weightlessly in the sky at Brandenburg Gate during the festival week. Participants can also post their digital messages on the project website www.mauerfall30.berlin.

Film project “Done with courage!”

Courage, the fall of the Wall, walls today: What do Berlin pupils think about these topics? **Short films** made by children and young people will be presented on the website www.mauerfall30.berlin and during the festival week.

Take part with your own event

From September 2019 a central **event calendar** will be available on the website www.mauerfall30.berlin, providing an overview of the many events on offer in Berlin. Museums, memorials, associations, educational institutes, initiatives and artists’ groups are invited to take part. Event organizers can register events to be held before 15 January 2020, and these will be added to the calendar.

The seven locations in their historical context

Gethsemane Church

From May 1989 the public became increasingly aware of an opposition movement that had existed since the late 1970s/early 1980s, and which had initially been concerned with issues relating to the environment, human rights, and peace. The movement's ongoing protests against local election fraud garnered public attention and initiated a revolt against the SED regime that increased in scope and intensity through to the autumn of that year. From September 1989 more and more people demonstrated for democratic change, first in Leipzig and Dresden, then in East Berlin, Plauen and other cities. Eventually, arrests were made and the state resorted to violence, including in front of Gethsemane Church in the Berlin district of Prenzlauer Berg. An opposition information and media centre had been established there at the beginning of October. The church would become a significant site of resistance to the SED regime in Berlin.

Alexanderplatz

The largest protest demonstration in GDR history took place on Alexanderplatz on 4 November 1989. Hundreds of thousands of people gathered to demonstrate for a different, more democratic GDR. One of their key demands: freedom of travel. The demonstrators drew attention to their protest and demands with thousands of creative banners – and it was all legal, since the demonstration had received official approval.

Brandenburg Gate

The SED leadership sought to contain the protests and the ongoing exodus with a new travel law. In a casual remark on the early evening of 9 November 1989, the government spokesman Günter Schabowski noted the introduction of new travel regulations. One hour later, Western television stations were announcing the news: "GDR opens borders". Citizens of East Berlin thronged to border crossings at the Berlin Wall within the city, and on the same evening they forced the opening of the Wall. After 28 years, the border that had divided Berlin, Germany and Europe had fallen. At the Brandenburg Gate, *the* symbol of the division of Germany and Europe, there were scenes of celebration and joy, which were broadcast all around the world.

Kurfürstendamm

One day after the fall of the Wall, West Berlin, and in particular Kurfürstendamm – a place of longing and a symbol of freedom and prosperity – witnessed the mass arrival of East Berliners and moving scenes of euphoria. The following days were marked by the spirit of friendship and the opportunities presented by this newly-won freedom.

However the sudden opening of the border placed pressure on politicians. How should West Berlin and the Federal Republic deal with this new situation? What impact would the fall of the Wall have on the future course of the Peaceful Revolution?

Stasi Headquarters

Beginning in December 1989, demonstrators moved to occupy the offices of the secret police across East Germany. Eventually, on 15 January 1990, thousands of people forced their way into the Berlin headquarters of the Stasi. The SED's most important instrument of power was finally wrested from its grasp. Citizen committees tried to control the dissolution of the secret service and prevent the destruction of Stasi files. The occupation of the Stasi offices led, at the same time, to a dispute about how the history GDR should be interpreted, which is still ongoing to this day.

Schlossplatz

The first and only democratic elections in GDR history, on 18 March 1990, represented probably the greatest success of the Peaceful Revolution. The power of the SED regime was finally broken. The first freely-elected parliament took its seats in the Palast der Republik, until that point a symbol of a sham democracy and the SED's pretension to absolute power. The path to democracy had been paved, and an important prerequisite for German Unification had been achieved. More than 75 percent of all votes cast favoured parties that had promised a rapid unification.

East Side Gallery

Artists created the East Side Gallery by painting a section of the Wall in Friedrichshain. This artistic takeover marks – and at the same time symbolizes – the departure towards a unified city with a new confidence: liberal, international and with an affinity for art and culture – but also shaped by the tensions between free spaces and commercialization, old and new Berliners, financial hardship and cultural capital.

More information and photo material to download can be found at www.mauerfall30.berlin.

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