



Jewish Museum Berlin

2013

Press Information

: **“Between the Lines” The Architecture of the Jewish Museum Berlin**

The new building of the Jewish Museum Berlin was completed in 1998 and soon became an object of fascination. By the time the museum opened in September 2001, the empty shell had attracted nearly 350,000 visitors. Daniel Libeskind won the competition for the “Extension of the Berlin Museum with the Jewish Museum Department” in 1989. In 1992, the foundation stone was laid for the new building, which was endowed with the German Architecture Award in 1999. The Jewish Museum Berlin was the first design by Daniel Libeskind that was realized and brought him fame as an architect.

Coated in an alloy of titanium and zinc, the new building sets itself apart from the city’s numerous museum buildings both old and new by embodying Berlin’s history in its own unique way. “The museum for such a place as Berlin should not only be for the citizens of the present, but should be accessible, let’s say imaginatively or metaphysically, to citizens of the past and of the future, a place for all citizens, a place to confirm a common heritage.” (Daniel Libeskind, *Between the Lines*)

“Between the Lines” is the name Libeskind gave his design. Two lines symbolize the tense interplay between German and Jewish history. The first line has several kinks and lends the building its characteristic zigzag shape whereas the second line is straight and cuts through the whole building. At the intersections of these lines are empty spaces – Voids – which rise vertically from the ground floor of the building up to the roof. These five empty spaces are evocative of the void created by the extermination of



Jewish life in Germany; they are 24 meters high, are not air-conditioned, and are largely without artificial light. Visitors come across these "Voids" time and again on their way through the museum.

Daniel Libeskind's design connects to the German-Jewish cultural history of Berlin in a variety of ways. A fundamental concept was to plot the addresses of prominent Jewish and German citizens – the links between Jewish tradition and German culture – on a map of Berlin. An invisible matrix emerged that is reflected in the building's zigzag outline and the slanted window slits. Daniel Libeskind cites Arnold Schönberg's unfinished opera "Moses and Aron", Walter Benjamin's essay "One Way Street", and the Memorial Book commemorating the Jewish victims of persecution ("Gedenkbuch") as further cultural sources of inspiration for his architecture.

The entrance to the Jewish Museum Berlin is located in the Baroque Collegienhaus, designed by Philipp Gerlach and built in 1734/35. It housed the Prussian Supreme Court for nearly two centuries. A long staircase leads visitors into the basement of the new building and the three axes symbolizing three fates of German Jews. Visitors are confronted with the situation of Jews during the Nazi regime through the "Axis of Exile" and the "Axis of the Holocaust", at the end of which an empty, nearly 24 meter high tower can be found. The "Holocaust Tower" is a memorial within the museum. Daniel Libeskind called this dark, cold room, where only distant sounds of the street can be heard, a "Voided Void".

At the end of the "Axis of Emigration", a heavy door leads outside to the "Garden of Exile". The sloping floor and lopsided stelae here evoke the total instability and lack of orientation experienced by those who were forced to emigrate and set up new lives abroad. Oleaster, symbolizing hope, grows out of the 49 concrete stelae. The "Garden of Exile" is the only square form in the Libeskind Building.



The third axis in the basement is the “Axis of Continuity”, which represents the present and the future. It leads via the Sackler Staircase to the exhibition above and the Eric F. Ross Gallery, where temporary exhibitions are held. The long, white staircase ends in “nowhere” – after the final landing, eight further steps lead to a white wall. The only Void that can be entered is off the Eric F. Ross Gallery on ground level. It contains an installation entitled “Shalechet” (Fallen Leaves) by the Israeli artist Menashe Kadishman. More than 10,000 open-mouthed faces cut from thick iron plates cover the floor.

A Glass Courtyard designed by Daniel Libeskind was added to the Old Building in fall 2007. Next to the group entrance, completed in 2005 by the architect Matthias Reese (who was project head when the Jewish Museum was built), the Glass Courtyard forms a further addition to the old building. The new glass roof, which covers the 670 m² u-shaped courtyard of the Baroque Old Building, the former Collegienhaus, is supported by four freestanding bundles of steel pillars. The structure of a tree was the inspiration for the construction of supporting pillars which extend into the roof forming a steel network. Daniel Libeskind named his design for the Glass Courtyard “Sukkah” after the hut that is traditionally erected for the “Sukkot” holiday. The Glass Courtyard serves as a large function venue.

The building complex is surrounded by a green area. Hans Kollhoff and Arthur Ovaska designed the garden behind the Old Building as part of an international building exhibition in 1987. The grounds around the Libeskind Building were planned by the landscape architects Cornelia Müller, Elmar Knippschild, and Jan Wehberg. The larger of the two courtyards between the Old Building and the Libeskind Building was also part of this plan. The ground topography pattern originated from artwork by Gisèle Celan-Lestrange, Paul Celan’s wife.



Historical Data

Competition decision: June 1989
Foundation stone laid: November 1992
Topping-out ceremony: May 1995
Completion: December 1998
Opening: 2001

Technical Data

Gross floor area: 15,500 m²
Net area: 12,500 m²
Exhibition space: 5,600 m²
Offices, workshops, library: 1,800 m²

Planners and Project Members

Building owner: the state of Berlin, Senate Administration for Science,
Research, and Culture
Architect: Daniel Libeskind
Construction supervision: Arge Beusterien and Lubic, Berlin
Grounds: Müller, Knippschild

Execution

Shell construction: Fischer Bau, Berlin
Windows: Trube & Kings, Uersfeld/Eifel
Facade: Werner & Sohn, Berlin
Building services: Klima Bau, Frankfurt/ Main, Voigt Bode, Sieversdorf,
Nordbau, Nassenheide
Electrical engineering: Alpha, Berlin

Specialist Planners

Structural planning: GSE Tragwerkplaner, Berlin, IGW Ingenieurgruppe
Wiese, Berlin
Building services: KST, Berlin
Lighting: Lichtplanung Dinnebier KG, Wuppertal



A selection of exterior and interior views of the Jewish Museum Berlin can be downloaded at our website: www.jmberlin.de > Press > Photo Download > Architecture

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