

# MUSEUM EPHRAIM - PALAIS



## EAST BERLIN. Half a capital



May – November 2019

Ephraim Palace Museum, Poststraße 16, 10178 Berlin

[www.ost.berlin](http://www.ost.berlin)

**Press conference:**

Thursday, May 9, 2019 | 11 am

**Opening festival:**

Friday, May 10, 2019 | 1 – 10 pm

Official opening | 6 pm

Saturday, May 11, 2019 | 10 am – 6 pm

New special exhibition at the Ephraim Palace Museum

This year, to mark the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Stadtmuseum Berlin turns its focus to the East. The exhibition **East Berlin. Half a capital** at the Ephraim Palace Museum addresses social and cultural life in the former capital of the GDR from the end of the 1960s to November 1989. The exhibition looks at the contradictions between the capital city's political claims and the diverse realities of everyday life that shaped East Berlin.

Three floors of the museum explore every facet of urban living in East Berlin, from residential life to work, consumption and culture. A diverse accompanying programme with numerous guests and contemporary historical figures is dedicated to individual stories and experiences. In addition to guided tours of the exhibition, there will also be readings, a film series at Babylon cinema, discussions, a theatrical revue at the Volksbühne Berlin and the event series "On-Site Discoveries" with Berlin's regional museums.

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*"We're showing a wide range of perspectives on East Berlin, because the city had many faces", explains Dr Jürgen Danyel, Deputy Director of the Center for Contemporary Historical Research Potsdam (ZZF) and curator of the exhibition. "As a centre of power, the capital provided attractive opportunities for professional and political advancement. But the big city also offered niches for people who wanted to break out of the confines of small town life in the GDR".*

The entrance to the exhibition sets a symbolic tone with a rocket from the Plänterwald amusement park, representing both the GDR's belief in progress as well as its eventual decline. The first object inside the exhibition is a scale model of East Berlin's city centre made in the 1980s, which is displayed in dialogue with city portraits by East Berlin artists such as Walter Womacka, Harald Metzkes, Sabine Peukert and Joachim Böttcher. Distinctive structures such as Karl-Marx-Allee, the modern city centre surrounding the Television Tower and the large prefabricated housing developments in Marzahn and Hellersdorf have shaped the architectural face of East Berlin.

Alexanderplatz became a theatre of urban life. The World Clock was a popular meeting point, the *Centrum Warenhaus* department store buzzed with shoppers, and on 4 November 1989 cries of "*Wir sind das Volk*" ("We are the people") resounded across the square.

This exploration of the bygone city leads visitors from the *Mokka-Milch* ice cream café to the old-time Berliner pub *Metzer Eck* and on to the historical Nicholas' Quarter. The Ephraim Palace's ornate Schlüter Hall looks at how the capital of the GDR represented itself and documents the reconstruction of the historic quarter that took place to mark Berlin's 750th anniversary in 1987. Media stations use the equestrian statue of Frederick the Great and the reconstruction of St Nicholas' Church to illustrate the return to history. Alongside these is a *Germina* skateboard, the only skateboard offered on the market for socialist youth in the GDR. A film of a tram ride along line 58 gives an atmospheric impression of East Berlin in the late 1980s. A street panorama of the buildings and shops along Greifswalder Straße and Klement-Gottwald-Allee, compiled from numerous photographs, shows everyday life in a form very different to the one we know today.

East Berlin: Centre of power and showcase of socialism

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The exhibition recalls the city's role as the political centre of power with television images of the annual May demonstrations and a map documenting the proliferation of State regulatory and surveillance organisations. At the same time, the capital was an attractive destination for people who wanted to lead lives outside of the political norm. The Hirschhof on Oderberger Straße in Prenzlauer Berg was a well-known site for the early days of the citizens' movement and for alternative culture in East Berlin. The sculpture from which the location takes its name is presented as an original design model.



More than almost any other medium, photography shapes the memory of East Berlin. The pictures by photographers such as Dieter Breitenborn, Rüdiger Disselberger, Harald Hauswald and Helga Paris still give us insight into a vanished way of life. Differences between the photographs created by freelance photographers and those provided by official suppliers such as the *Deutsche Werbe- und Anzeigengesellschaft (DEWAG)* and the *Allgemeiner Deutsche Nachrichtendienst (ADN)* highlight different photographic views on society.

Showcase apartments, a model of the "WBS 70" prefabricated building series and typical furnishings give a taste of what it felt like to reside in the GDR. The "prefab" residential concept enjoyed great popularity due to the fact that pre-war residential buildings remained largely unrenovated. Those who could

furnished their flats with high-quality pieces such as the model 53693 armchair by the VEB Deutsche Werkstätten Hellerau. Such furnishings were based on the Bauhaus style, bridging design and functionality, and today they are popular collector's items.

As a showcase of socialism, East Berlin had the privilege of offering a wide range of consumer goods, giving a touch of cosmopolitanism amid the narrowness of the GDR. Fashion was both a social attitude and a political statement. As a Western product, jeans were long regarded as harmful to young people. Only in 1974 did the East German models *Boxer*, *Wisent* and *Shanty* become available to provide a counterpart to *Levi's* from the West. While textile, ready-made and leather goods collections were designed for industrial production at the GDR Fashion Institute, many people made their own clothing, mostly based on patterns in the magazine *Sibylle*, the "Vogue of the East". The exhibition shows how fashion became a locus of freedom and how clothing became a means of expressing individual lifestyles in everyday life.

The journey of rediscovering East Berlin goes beyond the Ephraim Palace Museum and out into the city. Together with Berlin's regional museums, the series **"On-Site Discoveries"** presents events throughout the city to accompany the exhibition.

## Opening Festival 10-11 May 2018 | free admission

For the opening of the special exhibition "East Berlin", Stadtmuseum Berlin invites you to a two-day festival with talks, film screenings, stories and live music at the Ephraim Palace Museum. The exhibition team as well as many prominent guests will be present, including *Ost-Berlin Androgyn*, Marion Brasch, Peter Pragal, Annett Gröschner, *Lilli Berlin*, Mark Reeder, *Wolle XDP* and the *raubdruckerin*.

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Released in conjunction with the exhibition, the **essay collection** "Ost Berlin. 30 Erkundungen" features contributions by Götz Aly, Regine Sylvester, Marion Brasch, Lea Streisand, Mark Reeder and *Lilli Berlin*, among others. The volume was edited by exhibition curator Dr Jürgen Danyel and published by *Ch. Links Verlag*.

Further information on the exhibition and the accompanying programme can be found at:  
**[www.ost.berlin](http://www.ost.berlin)**

## A joint exhibition by:

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## Downloads

[www.artpress-uteweingarten.de/de/press](http://www.artpress-uteweingarten.de/de/press)

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## Image captions

Image 1 | Kinzigstraße, 1987 © & Foto: Rüdiger Disselberger

Image 2 | Bauarbeiter bei Montagearbeiten an der Leuchtschrift auf dem „Haus der Statistik“, 13. August 1969 © Bundesarchiv (183-H0813-0026-001) | Foto: Eva Brüggmann

Image 3 | Aus der Serie: Frauen im Bekleidungswerk VEB Treffmodelle Berlin, 1984 © & Foto: Helga Paris

Image 4 | Aus der Mappe: Arbeit. 1985 – 1988, Staubfreier Raum (Ausschnitt), 1987 © & Foto: Gundula Schulze Eldowy

Image 5 | Aus der Mappe: Die Pracht der Macht (Ausschnitt), 1984 – 90 © & Foto: Ulrich Wüst

Image 6 | Mehrzweckgaststätte „Ahornblatt“ auf der Fischerinsel an der Gertraudenstraße, um 1973 © Landesarchiv Berlin | Foto: Dieter Breitenborn