The Palace and the Castle: A Tale of Divided Memory in United Berlin

by

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .............................................................................................................3

List of Images ......................................................................................................................4

Preface ...............................................................................................................................5

Chapter One The Road to the Stadtschloß: the ‘heart’ of Berlin from 1443 to 1990 .................................................................................................................................19

Chapter Two Palast der Republik v. Berliner Stadtschloß: the ambiguous future of the site post reunification ........................................................................................................44

Chapter Three The Humboldt Forum and the Future of Memory in Berlin: the plans for the future of the site ........................................................................................72

Epilogue The Cycle Continues ............................................................................................107

Bibliography .......................................................................................................................115
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List of Images

**Figure 1:** “Die Burg um 1500” 21

**Figure 2:** “Schloß Joachim II um 1570” 23

**Figure 3:** “View from the Lustgarten” 26

**Figure 4:** “Dome and Portal” 27

**Figure 5:** “Schinkel’s Altes Museum” 28

**Figure 6:** “Die Berliner Stadtmitte am Kriegsende 1945” 30

**Figure 7:** “The Palast der Republik” 32

**Figure 8:** “Entrance Hall of the Palast” 32

**Figure 9:** “Weg und Ziel” 51

**Figure 10:** “Berlin_Palast” 58

**Figure 11:** “Untitled (Palast der Republik #28)” 67

**Figure 12:** “Palast der Republik- Zweifel” 70

**Figure 13:** “Neu Schloss” 80

**Figure 14:** Eastern Façade and Belvedere 86

**Figure 15:** Southern Façade 86

**Figure 16:** Northern Façade 86

**Figure 17:** Western Façade 86

**Figure 18:** “Exhibition Guide” 92

**Figure 19:** “Postal Uniforms on Stamps-Germany (East)” 100

**Figure 20:** “Construction on the Eastern Façade” 110
Introduction

I had already been in Berlin for six weeks when my father came to visit during the summer of 2014. It was his first time in Europe and he would only be there for a criminally short three days. I was committed to packing as much in as possible in this short time including walking miles around the city in 90° heat, drinking plenty of German beer and eating heartily. One day we took the hour-long train ride to Potsdam to stroll in the Sanssouci Park and admire the various palaces and structures that generations of Prussian royalty had built in this area. Many tourists who visit Berlin make the trek out to Potsdam; it is always filled with groups of children on school trips and tourists of various nationalities, all there to admire the beautiful structures and immaculately kept grounds. My father enjoyed this trip and wanted to keep exploring long after I was ready to find some respite from the heat at a café or restaurant. When I finally convinced him for a break we wandered into the city center of Potsdam, a pedestrian only zone, and grabbed a seat at a vaguely interesting looking cafe. I noticed my father looking around, not at the people on the street or the storefronts, but up, at the facades of the buildings, at the architecture. After a bout of silence, he turned to me and said: “It is all a bit too Disney for me.” I knew exactly what he meant.

The buildings in this area can only be described as vibrant. They are bold shades of pink, orange, and yellow set on a beautiful and remarkably clean cobblestone alley. This area is clearly a historical section of Potsdam; it is what one pictures when one thinks of an old German town. But it is also clear that these buildings are not older than forty years. They are too pristine, too immaculate to be
the original structures, which makes sense seeing as the center of Potsdam was heavily damaged during the bombing raids of World War Two. Instead of leaving the damaged buildings the East Germans spent their precious resources recreating some of the historical city center of Potsdam as it would have been in the late nineteenth century.¹ What they created was a historical center that was vaguely like Disney World: it may be historically accurate but it is too pristine, too clean, and too new to be authentic. The streets are filled with tourists; the shops are selling miniature versions of Sansoucci, the Neues Palais or the Chinesische Haus, or what can only be described as Prussian memorabilia. Potsdam in the post division years has become a tourist attraction, a site of commerce where the unpleasant past has been removed. This was not unique to Potsdam but can be seen throughout Berlin as well.

My father and I took the train back from Potsdam a few hours later and as we were walking from the train station to my apartment my father stopped at a non-descript building that I had passed dozens of times without noticing. The only thing that had raised his attention was the odd sporadic pattern of holes in the side of the building. He noted that they were bullet holes, most likely from the Battle of Berlin in 1945, and we spent the next thirty minutes or so walking slowly down this street looking for other such patterns. It struck me that he had no patience for the carefully replicated histories of Potsdam but was enthralled by history that was captured here, immortalized for the time, in stone. This history was not particularly pretty; these bullet holes are often referred to as “the scars of Berlin,” and are visible reminders of

the trauma, and the closeness, of the war. Yet, history in Berlin has become image-oriented and maintaining these scars has become far less important than reconstructing what have been deemed as historically-minded buildings.

Following World War Two many buildings saw reconstructions that transformed them into havens of history and memory. Whole neighborhoods, such as the Nikolaiviertel, which at the time of its renovation lay in East Berlin, were renovated in such a manner. But historical authenticity and accuracy came second to overall image. It was far more important that these structures looked historical rather than actually reflecting a correct historical time period. It became about image and ambiance, not substance. The history that inherently exists in these buildings is often covered up by the history that is desired. This sentiment, so prevalent in post reunification Berlin, is what drew me to the topic of my thesis: the debate concerning the reconstruction of the baroque Stadtschloß and the demolition of the East German Parliament building, the Palast der Republik.

On June 12, 2013 Joachim Gauck, the current President of Germany, laid the foundation stone of the long awaited reconstruction project of the Berliner Stadtschloß, the Hohenzollern family city palace. I was in Berlin at this time and this event was on the front page of many newspapers and magazines; it was unavoidable.

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3 Urban, Neo—Historical Berlin, 122.

4 Stadtschloß translates to “City Castle,” and Palast der Republik to “Palace of the Republic.”

At the time, I was taking a class on the critical reconstruction era of Berlin, which followed the changes in the integral architecture of Berlin in the 1990s and 2000s. This construction project, which was in the very center of Berlin, appealed to me in the context of this class and at some point in the following week I found myself at the site, which at the time was still a large empty lot. It was littered with cranes and bright orange construction equipment, but I was surprised to recognize where I was. I was standing on Museum Island, which meant I had passed this site many times without giving it a second glance. If I looked to the west I could see the Brandenburg gate and the Pariser Platz in the distance, to the north stood the Altes Museum and the Berliner Dom, to the east loomed Alexanderplatz’s iconic Fernsehturm and directly to the south was the empty lot that would house the Stadtschloß. Many of the articles I had read had cited its location as in the heart of Berlin, or as the heart of Berlin, and in that moment I was convinced it was as well. It really did seem as if the building stood in or on the heart of the city, since it was surrounded by some of the most recognizable features of Berlin.

One could not see directly into the construction site, it was shielded by eight foot high scaffolding that had brightly colored mesh material draped over it. These vibrant coverings were decorated with repetitive slogans. They read “Deine Wohung hat eins. Dein Hund hat eins. Dein Fahrrad hat eins. Deine Liebe hat eins. Jetzt deine...”

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Stadt hat eins.” The pronoun “eins” (one) they were referring to was a key. “Your apartment has a key,” with a picture of a standard locked door and key pictured, or “your dog has a key,” with a cartoon dog and a collar depicted, “your bike has a key,” and “your love has a key.” The last sentence read “and now your city has a key.” The key here is referring to the Stadtschloß. When I first saw this display it made little sense to me, and it was not until nearly a year later, when I was back in Berlin and these coverings were still standing (although they then came nowhere close to covering the looming concrete structure behind them) that I understood their message.

By this time, the summer of 2014, I had been reading up on this building and the controversies that have surrounded it. I understood that one of the main arguments for reconstruction of the Stadtschloß was that the Schloß existed before the city, that it was the key to and the heart of Berlin. The infamous essay, written by pro-Schloß supporter Wolf Jobst Siedler in 1991, entitled, “Das Schloß lag nicht in Berlin—Berlin war das Schloß,” [The Schloß does not lay in Berlin—Berlin was the Schloß] in many ways touched off the debate and inspired many people who would later become prominent proponents of its reconstruction. This sentiment resonated with many people— the sentiment that Berlin would not be whole without the Schloß and that any other building that stood on the site could not fulfill the symbolic role the Schloß has held in the city’s history. The problem was, in 1991 another building did stand on this site, the Palast der Republik.

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7 Referring to the popular “love locks,” which are locked onto bridges in Europe.
The Palast der Republik was completed in 1973 and housed the East German Parliament, the Volkskammer. Nearly twenty-five years earlier the East Germans had demolished the questionably salvageable ruins of the Stadtschloß, purportedly as a symbolic gesture to mark the end of Prussia and as a statement of victory of communism. While this demolition was heavily protested in the West, Westerners had no control over buildings that were in the East and they could only lament the loss of such a historically important building. Upon reunification retribution for this act was demanded in the form of demolition of the Palast. This touched off a fierce debate with which my thesis is concerned: The Palast der Republik versus the Berliner Stadtschloß.

At the outset of this project it appeared that I would mainly be dealing with the debate and the implications it had for East German memory in a reunified Germany. While this issue still appears in this work, other issues of memory and history in Berlin and Germany arose as I uncovered the peculiarly tumultuous history of the contested site. Most of the literature surrounding the debate does not extend back further than the 1950 demolition. It is also mainly black and white: either pro Palast or pro Stadtschloß and deals with, similarly to what I initially was interested in, the future of East German memory and how the debate exemplifies that East German memory in the wake of reunification has been colonized and marginalized to an astonishing extent.

The scholarship concerning this debate and the implications that it has for memory in Berlin developed concurrently with the debate, so that as decisions were being made about the fate of this site, the scholarship was shifting. In the early stages
of the debate, many scholars were concerned with the strange relationship between east and west, and how easterners and westerners perceived their counterparts. Two such historians who wrote in the mid 1990s and were concerned with the motives that the Westerners had for demolishing the Palast were Brian Ladd and David Tieman Doud. In 1995, only five years after reunification, Doud published *Berlin 2000* and asked why the Westerners wanted to demolish the Palast. His argument was that the Palast der Republik was a constant reminder of the former communist regime, and that the new unified Germany would want to, at least initially, purge this memory.\(^9\) Ladd, who wrote *The Ghosts of Berlin* in 1997, argued similarly that the demolition of the Palast was desired, by easterners and westerners alike, because it would symbolize an ideological victory in the Cold War.\(^10\) Many sources that were dealing with this issue in this time period were more interested in understanding the political and ideological reasons behind this debate. Both Doud and Ladd also spoke of revenge and retribution for the wrongs committed by the Communist regime. Ladd mentions former East German Chairman Ulbricht’s decision to demolish the ruins of the Schloß, and calls it a symbolic gesture. He was physically ridding East Berlin of a powerful reminder of Prussian militarism. The Western desire to now demolish the Palast would be retribution for this injustice.\(^11\) These two historians are indicative of the types of questions that were being asked at this time. As the debate developed and


\(^11\) Ibid., 59—60.
as it became clear that this building would be in fact demolished, the questions expanded.

The debate had been raging for almost a decade without any conclusion yet being reached when Svetlana Boym published *The Future of Nostalgia* in 2001. At this point it was still unclear what exactly was the fate of the Palast and the protestors against demolition were gaining recognition and support. The city had been unified for over a decade, yet it was still healing, and the scholarship concerning the Palast at this time began to try and answer the questions of mending the New Berlin. Boym put much less emphasis on the political and ideological nature of the debate and instead turned to the social implications. In her understanding, the effort to rebuild the Schloß, while it had political meaning, was more about healing the city. She argued that the Easterners were concerned with their loss of history.\footnote{Svetlana Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia* (New York: Basic Books, 2001), 180—194.} Boym further delved into the debate and argued that the while reconstruction of the Schloß was meant to unite Germany by harkening back to a shared past, instead it opened up the social schisms within the city. She, however, did not negate the importance of the political nature of the debate, yet her emphasis was focused more on the “colonial” tendencies of the West instead of the idea of revenge or retribution.\footnote{Ibid., 183.} Overall, the East Berliners felt that their history was being taken, a feeling that was expressed in this debate. Elizabeth Strom, another historian writing at this time, also wrote of the colonization of East Germany by their western counterpart. East Berliners felt that the West was trying to eliminate everything that held symbolic meaning to them, and trying to
forcefully impose their beliefs. The sense of nostalgia they felt for the East was strengthened by the Western tendency to rid the city of everything considered to be “eastern.” Boym and Strom were writing at a crucial point in the debate. They had been able to witness the past decade’s discussion, yet no concrete conclusion had yet been reached. The deeper emotional attachment to the Palast was beginning to emerge, and the emphasis in scholarship began it shift from political aspect of the debate towards the social aspect and the idea that this debate was indicative of two cities colliding and attempting to find some sort of common memory.

Didem Ekici and Adrian von Buttlar who wrote “The Surfaces of Memory in Berlin” and “Berlin’s Castle versus Palace,” respectively, both focused their essays on architectural continuity. Ekici placed an emphasis on the need for visual harmony and noted that Unter den Linden (the street that leads up to the Palace/Schloß) was covered in Prussian monuments such as the Brandenburg Gate or the Altes Museum. The only way to gain this visual harmony was to rebuild the Schloß. Von Buttlar also commented on the need for cohesiveness in the city center, and stated that many experts thought that the Stadtschloß should be rebuilt “for the sake of beauty.” Other historians, such as William J.V. Neill note that while the architectural continuity argument may have some merit, demolishing the Palast in favor of reconstruction of the Schloß demonstrated Berlin’s willingness to physically

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blast one history out of existence in order to return to one that is deemed more harmonious. Neill also speaks of the “disneyfication” of the Prussian history and warns those in favor of reconstruction of glossing over the nastier bits of history in order to make the past appear, in a sense, prettier.  

Andrew Webber wrote in *Berlin in the Twentieth Century*, that this reworking of the Baroque style of the Stadtschloß was understandable, and needed to cope with the direct historical past of the city. However, Weber, Ekici, and von Buttler were not necessarily advocating for the reconstruction of the Stadtschloß; they were echoing arguments that were developing at that time. They were trying to deal with a new situation. It was no longer, if the Stadtschloß would be reconstructed, but when. All of the works mentioned here were written post 2002, after the final vote had been cast and the Palast was to be demolished in the coming years and replaced by a reconstruction of the Stadtschloß.

Uta Staiger in her essay “Cities, Citizenship, Contested Cultures,” emphasizes how this debate reflects a Berlin in transition, a Berlin seeking a new identity. The idea that Berlin was searching for a new identity and was looking to the past to construct it took hold in the post-2003 scholarship. Claire Colomb in “Requiem for a Lost Palast,” also wrote on the search for this identity. She comments on the longevity of the debate and believes that there was such a disagreement because there has been no common identity for the past 40 years and it was generally felt that the decision concerning this plot of land would set the stage for a development of a new,

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common identity. In Stephan Naumann’s “Solving the Stadtschloß Dilemma” he also addresses this need for a common identity and, like Colomb, recognizes that this debate highlighted the fissures in Berlin and showed that it is not, yet, a truly united city.

Jane Kramer’s book, *The Politics of Memory*, also deals with issues of collective memory and commemoration in Germany in the post reunification years and the larger, more complicated, question of German national identity. She addresses the parallels in how the Nazi and the GDR past have been dealt with. Kramer also believes that the East Germans and West Germans have dealt with the past during the years of division indistinguishable ways. Both fabricated myths - the west of democratic culture, and the east of German anti-fascist resistance. Another important book that deals with these issues, and issues similar to them, is Dirk Verheyen’s *United City, Divided Memories*. In this book, Verheyen urges the German people to learn from the ways in which they have dealt with the Nazi past, and use that to come to terms with the GDR past in a quicker, more effective and more direct way.

These works are crucial in understanding the modern issues of the site, but after researching the entire history of this site and the controversies that have surrounded it for centuries, I understood that the debate and the reconstruction of the

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Schloß can speak not only to the implications of East German memory but to the implications of memory in Germany in general. Works such as Alexandra Richie’s *Faust’s Metropolis* illustrate how Berlin as a city manipulates history and has been doing so for centuries. This site in particular has been manipulated by nearly every regime since its inception in the mid fifteenth century and thus can speak to how memory and history are treated in Berlin. Not much scholarship has been written marrying the history of the site from the fifteenth century to the twentieth with the debate in post-reunification Berlin. Here is where I hope to contribute to the scholarship of the site. By juxtaposing a chronicle of the site dating back to 1443 with a chronicle of the debate, the aim is to expose just how similar the actions taken today in regards to the site are with the overall history of the site and the cyclical and repetitive nature this site has taken.

I will argue that the treatment of this site in the years since reunification, the demolition of the Palast and the reconstruction of the Berliner Stadtschloß, is very similar to the treatment the site has received in the preceding centuries by those in power. How Berliners interact with this site and the lengths to which they go to manipulate it emphasize their hesitance to come to terms with their most recent pasts and their willingness to distort that past for gain. Throughout the past six centuries the buildings on this site have undergone constant renovations that the rulers of Berlin have commissioned in order to change the aesthetic of the site but also in order to project a certain image about their regime. This theme permeates the entirety of this site’s history and this tradition continues on today. The controversy concerning this site, the prolonged debate over which structure was most appropriate in a reunified
Germany, is just another attempt by the government of Germany to manipulate the buildings that stood here to suit their needs.

When this debate is discussed it is not often put in the context of the larger history of the site. The issues that arose from the debate are often concerned with East German memory in reunified Germany but what I hope to indicate here is that this debate is not unique in German history. While the debate clearly encompasses issues of East German memory and how it had been treated in the 1990s and early 2000s it also encompasses broader issues of German memory. Prussian memory, for example, had undergone a significant reevaluation during the last decade or so of the Cold War and continued to be reevaluated post reunification. This reevaluation deeply impacted the future of this site; it allowed for the possibility of reconstructing a Prussian Schloß, which in previous years might have been viewed as dangerously nationalistic. I argue that the past and the future of this site are deeply entwined with Germany’s relationship with and its perception of its past.

Chapter One offers a history of the site before reunification. The aim is to highlight the rate at which this site transformed and how those in power manipulated this site for centuries before the East Germans demolished it. Throughout this chapter the motivations behind the renovations and additions to the Stadtschloß are exposed and how those in power in Berlin at any given time inevitably turned their attentions to the Stadtschloß as a means of projecting a desired image. Chapter Two is a chronicle and analysis of the debate that took place in the 1990s and early 2000s. This chapter emphasizes how factional the debate was, and how divisive. There were multiple architectural competitions held, articles written, and various tentative plans
for the future of this site that took place during this time period and the second chapter focuses on what these issues and event can say about history and memory in Berlin. The third chapter reveals that reconstruction of the Stadtschloß is indicative of how Prussian history has been reevaluated and reappraised over the last thirty-five years. By addressing the future plans for the site, including what will physically be constructed on the site as well as the plans the Humboldt-Forum has for the occupation of the interior spaces, I demonstrate how Prussian memory has shifted in the years preceding construction. The space hopes to become a welcoming, international space, which contradicts with the history of the site. I conclude by raising questions about the future of historical identity in Berlin, asking if it will continue to be manipulated in the years to come.
Chapter One: The Road to the Stadtschloß: the “heart” of Berlin from 1443 to 1990

A kilometer and a half east of the Brandenburg gate lies a plot of land whose tumultuous history is best reflected by the equally tumultuous history of the city of Berlin. The history of this plot extends back to the fifteenth century and forward to present day. Throughout these half dozen centuries the buildings on this plot of land have taken on the shape of those in power, reflecting the broader trend in Berlin of constant change and development. Karl Scheffler, a German art critic and journalist, once noted that, “Berlin is a city that never is, but is always in the process of becoming,” and the transformations that this plot of land have undergone exemplify that Berlin is always becoming something new but rarely settles long enough to be.24

Throughout the history of Berlin, the city and the citizens have attempted to create an identity through history, myth, legend, and culture. When history fails Berliners often turn to a mythologization of events in order to create the past they aspired to, and thus the identity of Berlin becomes hopelessly intertwined with a hybrid of existent and non-existent history, a peculiar combination of myth and fact. As the historian Alexandra Richie wrote, “in Berlin, the revision of history to suit current political needs has long been more extreme and more damaging than elsewhere.”25 Berlin has turned to this manipulation of history because it is a city with shallow roots, both physically and symbolically. It was founded on a seemingly uninhabitable site with particularly unfriendly soil. It was a city made by men with no

help from geography or geology. Because there was a lack of natural roots, the city lacked the feeling of permanence that was so prevalent in most other European cities. Throughout its history, Berlin constantly changed with the times, and no building or public space was safe from the next series of renovations. Each new ruler seemed to project upon Berlin an identity, and one of the most common ways of doing this was to change the architecture of the city.

This sense of continual change in Berlin is thus as old as the city itself. Wolf Jobst Siedler, a German writer who specializes in the study of architectural history of Berlin, wrote, “only in Berlin did each period consume the previous.” Siedler here is referring to the architecture of Berlin and the never ceasing transformation it went through. The tradition in Berlin was the lack of having any tradition, and that allowed for the constant shift in the city’s aesthetic. Later in his piece, Siedler notes the importance of residents of and travelers in Berlin’s diaries because every ten years they described a completely different city. Berlin was a city that easily forgot, and that allowed for a unique lack of permanence. This lack of tradition and permanence can be seen particularly well when looking at the history of the Schloßplatz in the city center. In the past six centuries, this site has become symbolically charged not only because of the myriad of politically and architecturally important buildings located here but also because of the rapidity through which it has undergone transformations.

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28 Ibid., 311.
The Development of Schloß and City

In the past six centuries this site, which would later be known as the Schloßplatz, has seen three complete demolitions, two partial ones, and a constant stream of renovations that had the buildings on this site continually morphing into completely new ones. As history progressed, the structures on this site were altered to fit the times; they picked up important aspects of each era, parts becoming associated with various myths and legends, and the site itself became a conduit for Berlin identity.

Schloß Zwingburg was the first building to sit here. It was constructed in the mid fifteenth century by the ruling family of the Brandenburg electorate, the Hohenzollerns. The Hohenzollern family would rule this region for the next five hundred years, ushering in a new, monumental age for Berlin and Brandenburg alike. At the time of its construction Berlin was a small village of about 8,000 inhabitants that lay in the shadow of the larger town of Cölln across the Spree River. Because the Schloß was built in Berlin when it was a small and relatively insignificant town, many contend that Berlin was born out of the

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Schloß, or rather that the Schloß is not located in Berlin, but Berlin in the Schloß. It was not built in the city center but rather the center of Berlin emerged around the Schloß. The city of Berlin would be transformed into the center of a great dynasty. The sandy soil of Berlin prevents roots from taking hold, making it a somewhat undesirable location and therefore without the Hohenzollern’s ascent to power and their significant efforts to transform Berlin, it may have never become the metropolis that it eventually was.

Schloß Zwingburg was an imposing fortress-like building that was not welcomed by the citizens of Berlin, but its impact was widely felt. Until this point, Berliners had minimal interaction with their ruling family, and this impressive fortress now cast a shadow on their city. The construction of this Schloß was closely associated with Frederick II’s, who was more commonly known as “Irontooth”, authoritarian rule, which was abhorred by many Berliners. The Hohenzollern’s were disrupting the status quo and angering many of the citizens who had never had to deal with the type of hands-on rule that Frederick II was implementing. He effectively ended traditional citizens rights by creating an independent administrative system that was entirely under his personal control. The construction of the Schloß on an island in the northeast sector of Berlin was seen as the ultimate symbol of disrespect. But the Schloß, in one incarnation or another, was there to stay.

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32 Richie, Faust’s Metropolis, 4.
33 Ibid., 31.
This building stood on this site for less than a hundred and fifty years, but it is responsible for imbuing this site with a deep importance for each subsequent ruler of Berlin. In the late sixteenth century, elector Joachim II demolished Schloß Zwingburg and constructed a Renaissance Schloß. Joachim was the first Hohenzollern ruler to make Berlin his permanent residence, and it seemed fitting that a new Schloß was in order. A new Schloß in this fashionable style may have symbolized the sophistication of Berlin and the ruling family. At this time the Hohenzollern family was attempting to establish Brandenburg and Berlin as centers of culture, and they hoped to do so by emulating the masters of humanist culture at this time and by paying homage to the Renaissance. Besides the cultural implications of the Renaissance, this version of the Stadtschloß was also trying to emulate the economic prowess of the Dutch. It was a Renaissance building but its focus was less on the Italian Renaissance and more on the Dutch. The Dutch at this time were an economic powerhouse with a trade empire admired by many, including the Prussians. By transforming the main Hohenzollern residence into an emulation of the Dutch,

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35 Holland, Schnurbgus and Walter, *Das Berliner Schloß*, 8.
36 Ibid., 10.
Joachim II was demonstrating his admiration and showing his willingness to build an economic system in their style.

The Prussians at this time were not a major economic power. But by making their city royal residence an emulation of a nation that was a dominant economic power they were projecting an image of such prowess, or at least attempting to do so. This theme permeates the entirety of this plot’s history. This building, as it stood in the fifteenth century, the sixteenth century and all centuries to come, become a symbol. Not a symbol of what Prussia was, but a symbol of what Prussia (and later Germany) wanted to be. The desired images of all the respective Prussian or German leaders were displayed in this building. When Schloß Zwingburg was first built it was meant to display ironclad power and tight control over the Berlin people, even though in actuality the tight control over their subjects was still being slowly established. When Joachim constructed this version of the Schloß economic power still evaded him, however by mimicking the Dutch style in his city residence he was demonstrating his desire for economic success, which was yet to come.

This version of the Schloß saw little use due to the onset of the Thirty Years War in 1618. The Hohenzollern family, under the questionable leadership of Georg Wilhelm I, abandoned Berlin for the town of Cleve on the lower Rhine, and the Schloß was allowed to fall into disrepair. The thirty years war physically and psychologically destroyed Berlin and it took the man deemed the “Great Elector,” Frederick William, to repair the damaged city. Frederick William again made Berlin the Hohenzollern’s main residence when the dust of war had settled, and he restored

the Schloß to its former glory. Because of his efforts in Berlin, the city was successfully transformed in the wake of the thirty years war from a medieval commerce town to a successful residence city.

Frederick William, however, did not focus most of his energy on culture and architecture, but rather on the development of a strong state and the army he created to defend it. The system he implemented in Berlin would go on to become the foundation for and the essence of the Prussian State. While he did restore the Schloß so that it was again inhabitable, he did not contribute greatly to an architectural redesign of the residence. His most noteworthy contributions included the redesign of the adjacent Lustgarten. He transformed the former kitchen garden into a formal garden with fountains and geometric paths. This was done in the Dutch style in honor of Frederick William’s Dutch Wife, Luise Henriette of Nassau.

While Frederick William did not place particular emphasis on the development of art and architecture in Berlin, his son Elector Frederick III (who would become Frederick I King in Prussia) turned his attentions to these more refined matters. With his ascension of the throne, the “golden age,” of the Berliner Schloß began. Frederick III saw great potential in the Schloß and enlisted his current court sculptor, Andreas Schlüter to create a new overall architectural design for the building. The Schloß that is remembered today, and the one that is currently being reconstructed (albeit in a modified form) in Berlin, is the baroque version that Schlüter designed. While much of the design of the Schloß was not realized while he

39 Clark, Iron Kingdom, 38—39.
40 Holland, Schnurbgus and Walter, Das Berliner Schloß, 10.
41 Ibid., 13.
was the head architect, he is still credited with the final version of the Schloß constructed under his successor, Johann Friedrich Eosander von Göthe.\(^{42}\)

King Frederick I was a contemporary of King Louis XIV of France who made Versailles into the standard to which all other European royal residences were held. Frederick I sought to transform the Schloß into a worthy competitor of Versailles, and through his extensive renovations, he transformed the Schloß “into a truly royal edifice. The palace of Berlin became a counterpart of equal standing to the magnificent baroque creations of the south and west.”\(^{43}\) From 1699 to 1713 the Stadtschloß was rapidly transformed into a monument of Hohenzollern power and influence. The initial plans for the Schloß included major alterations to the building, a new cathedral and new royal stables on the Spree Island.\(^{44}\) These plans were not realized in their entirety, but the transformation was still extreme. By the end of Frederick I’s reign, the Schloß was almost completely unrecognizable from the former renaissance palace.


\(^{44}\) Holland, Schnurbgus and Walter, *Das Berliner Schloß*, 17.
Schlüter’s plans for the Schloß were full of embellishments and ostentations architecture, which never came to be fully realized. After the collapse of the Mint Tower, which had been built adjacent to the Stadtschloß on sandy soil, Schlüter was dismissed in disgrace. The subsequent head court architect, Eosander von Göthe radically altered the concept for the Schloß by emphasizing great restraint with the existing elements. He adopted Schlüter’s sculptural façade but thoroughly simplified it and would intermingle overly embellished architecture with strictly unembellished architecture. Eosander’s complete vision never came to full fruition due to the death of Frederick. His son, Frederick William, the “Soldier King,” had little time for the development of the Schloß, which he saw as unnecessarily extravagant. His only significant contribution to it was the transformation of the Lustgarten from a garden, to a parade ground.

For the next two and a half centuries the façade of the Schloß was only minimally altered. The only significant addition in this time period was completed in 1848 by Frederick Wilhelm IV. This included the octagonal chapel with a highly

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45 Ibid., 34.
46 Ibid., 18.
47 Ibid., 18.
detailed cupola.\textsuperscript{48} This chapel was originally a part of Johann Eosander von Göthe’s design of the Schloß and with its completion the Schloß was a compilation of Schlüter and Eosander von Göthe’s respective visions. This was the last addition to the west side of the Schloß, and this new cupola was featured in the majority of the subsequent depictions of the building and quickly became synonymous with Prussia in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

This version of the Schloß became the architectural standard to which buildings constructed after Schlüter and Eosander von Göthe’s revisions were held, and many buildings in direct proximity to the Schloß mirrored many of its features. Karl Schinkel’s Altes Museum, constructed between 1825 and 1830, was designed with the Stadtschloß in mind; the architecture of these two buildings were in direct communication with each other.\textsuperscript{49} In the nineteenth century, one could stand at the base of the Brandenburg Gate and look eastward down Unter Den Linden, and the Stadtschloß would take up the majority of the view. This boulevard was considered the center of Berlin, and it was designed by the Hohenzollerns to reach from their city residence of the Stadtschloß to the Tiergarten, a game park two kilometers to the west.

\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 22.
\textsuperscript{49} Ladd, The Ghosts of Berlin, 53.
In 1871, King Wilhelm I of Prussia was elevated to the status of Kaiser Wilhelm I of Germany following the Franco-Prussian War that ended with the capture of Paris by Prussian troops. The conclusion of the war resulted in the unification of Germany under the new Kaiser and the Stadtschloß was now no longer just the center of Prussia and the residence of the Hohenzollern Kings, but was the center of the German Empire. Yet the Stadtschloß’s symbolic importance had been waning. There was a new building in the center of Berlin, two kilometers to the west on the opposite side of the Brandenburg Gate, the Reichstag, the seat of the German Parliament, which was now rivaling the Stadtschloß in symbolic power. While it continued to be a major visual presence in Berlin, it dwindled in political importance. By the turn of the century the Stadtschloß’s importance had reached a nadir.

The Schloß saw little architectural change before 1918 when Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicated and the Schloß’s five hundred-year reign as the Hohenzollern’s city residence came to an abrupt end. Thereafter, the Schloß remained in the city center and while occasionally occupied, saw no architectural transformations for over thirty years. The Schloß was then the temporary headquarters of the workers and Soldier’s Councils following the proclamation of a Free Socialist Republic. In November 1918 the Socialist Republic was put to an end during the ensuing sailors’ uprising when the Schloß become a battleground, which caused considerable damage to the building. Following this uprising, the Weimar Republic was established and the Stadtschloß lost its political function. During this time the Schloß was predominantly used as a museum and office space.

50 Richie, *Faust’s Metropolis*, 216.
51 Holland, Schnurbgus and Walter, *Das Berliner Schloß*, 22—23.
The Nazi’s had little use for the Schloß, as they preferred to use the more imposing Reichstag as the center of their regime.\textsuperscript{52} The Schloß, however, did not escape the harrowing damage of World War Two. Berlin as a city saw incredible damage and loss of life. Over half of the structures in Berlin were damaged, with a third of all structures being completely uninhabitable.\textsuperscript{53} In May of 1944 and February of 1945 bombs hit the Schloß and the interior was ravaged by fire.\textsuperscript{54} While the damage was severe, many contended that the ruins were salvageable. The Schloß was put to use immediately after the War and was used as an exhibition space for “Modern French Art,” in 1946.\textsuperscript{55} After Germany was officially separated into two states, the Federal Republic of Germany in the West and the German Democratic Republic in the East, in 1949, the East German leadership decided that this building would be demolished. In a speech to the Volkskammer, Walter Ulbricht declared, “The center of our capital, the Lustgarten and the area of the palace’s ruins, must become a grand square for demonstrations, upon which our people’s will for struggle and for progress can find

\textsuperscript{52} Ibid., 24.
\textsuperscript{53} Richie, \textit{Faust’s Metropolis}, 573.
\textsuperscript{54} Naumann, “Solving the Stadtschloß Dilemma,” 14.
expression.”56 However, citing the economic irresponsibility of funding a restoration of the Schloß, Walter Ulbricht, the communist General Secretary of the newly formed German Democratic Republic, declared it was unsalvageable and demolished the remainder of the Schloß by TNT in 1950.57 There has since been much debate concerning the validity of the claim that the Stadtschloß was unsalvageable. It was not in fact a complete ruin. This claim is supported because of the building’s ability in the wake of World War Two to hold public exhibitions.

In the west this was seen as a political act of violence, as a not-so-subtle way to mark the triumph of Communism over the old Prussian ways. While it was consistently maintained that the destruction of the ruins of the Stadtschloß was due to lack of funds to maintain or repair the building and the desire for Berlin not to become “the new Rome- a city of modern day ruins,” it was seen as a politically motivated act in the West.58 Ulbricht further politicized the decision by salvaging one portal of the Schloß, the fourth Portal, where Karl Liebknecht had declared the creation of the Free Socialist Republic during the last days of World War One. The remaining pieces of the Schloß were taken to the outskirts of Berlin to lay in large enclosures of architectural scrap and the rest was reduced to rubble from the TNT blasts. The demolition of the Schloß was seen as unnecessary by many, who pointed out that the Kremlin and the Winter Palace in Moscow survived the Russian

56 Boym, The Future of Nostalgia, 182.
57 Holland, Schnurbgus and Walter, Das Berliner Schloß, 24.
Revolution; both of these buildings were highly symbolic of the Romanov dynasty that had been violently toppled, yet they were allowed to remain standing.\(^5^9\)

After 1950 the site then sat empty for the next twenty-three years, serving as a site for mass-rallies and demonstrations, as well as a parking lot. In 1973, under a subsequent SED General Secretary, Erich Honecker, construction started on the Palast der Republik, colloquially known as the “People’s Palace.”\(^6^0\) This building was home to the Volkskammer, the East German rubber stamp parliament as well as various public spaces such as movie theaters, bowling alleys, and restaurants. Many of the things in this building were not readily available to the East German population elsewhere and thus it became a popular structure, even if its architecture was generally disliked. This building, completed in 1976, was built in the modern aesthetic, the “high gloss international modernism,” style. It was a large rectangular

\(^{59}\) Ladd, *Ghosts of Berlin*, 57.

\(^{60}\) Ibid., 58—59.
box clad in white marble and reflective glass. The reflective glass shone amber in the sunlight and reflected the area surrounding the Palast.\textsuperscript{61} It only took up a third of the plot of the former Schloß; the rest was used turned into a massive parking lot that was also used for mass rallies and celebrations. While it did not resemble any incarnation of the Schloß, it did serve a similar purpose. It was, as the Schloß was to the Hohenzollern’s Prussia, meant to be the center of East Germany. The site was significant for many East Berliners because weddings and other familial events were held there, and it offered a break in the monotony of East German life. The secular coming of age ceremony, Jugendweihe, took place annually in the Palast. During this ceremony the youth of Berlin would pledge their loyalty to the socialist state. While this was predominantly a propagandistic effort by the state it was still at time of celebration much like Confirmation is in the Roman Catholic and Protestant churches and was looked forward to by many.\textsuperscript{62} The Palast became even more significant in 1990 when the Volkskammer voted for reunification in the central chamber of the building. Yet, this building was also plagued with problems.

Following German reunification in 1990 the Palast was closed due to asbestos contamination and its fate was immediately brought into question. Due to lack of funds, the Palast was evacuated and left to fall into disrepair. The possibility of reconstructing a version of Schlüter’s Schloß was then introduced predominately by Hamburg businessman Wilhelm von Boddien and his interest group the Förderverein

\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 59
Berliner Schloß, as well as turning the site into something entirely different.\textsuperscript{63} Demolition of the Palast was called for either as retribution for Ulbricht’s demolition of the Schloß forty years before, because the Palast was deemed a hazardous space, or because it was considered an eyesore that ruined the skyline of Berlin.\textsuperscript{64} The next twelve years witnessed an intense debate about the fate of this building and out of lengthy discussions emerged four viable options. The first was to retain the Palast as an important historical site and spend the money to rid it of asbestos. The second was to retain the Palast and add onto it a modified reconstruction of the old Schloß, thus creating a hybrid version binding together two distinct histories. The third was to demolish the Palast and construct a new building that captured the spirit of reunified Germany. The fourth was to demolish the Palast and reconstruct a modified version of Schlüter’s baroque Schloß.\textsuperscript{65} This final option was what as settled on in 2002, and what is currently being carried out. The Palast der Republik was demolished in 2008 and in June of 2013, construction began on the new Schloß, which would be three facades of Schlüter’s Schloß and one modern façade, designed by the Italian architect Franco Stella.\textsuperscript{66}

The architectural history of this site is long and varied and through time this building and the many stages that it has gone through have come to symbolize the way in which Berlin deals with its immediate past and how Berliners construct their identity. The site is continually used as a means of creating a cohesive identity based

\textsuperscript{63} Colomb, “Requiem for a lost Palast,” 289.
\textsuperscript{64} Ladd, \textit{Ghosts of Berlin}, 62.
to some degree in a mythologization of Berlin’s history. The Schloß has not only mirrored the architectural transformations of the city but has also contributed to the formation of various myths and legends that have shaped Berliner identity. Events surrounding the Schloß and the Palast have taken on lives of their own, sometimes becoming based in myths rather than history. It’s this mythologization of the past that is important when studying the various reincarnations of the Schloß. The architectural history is crucial to understand not only how the city was physically and aesthetically shaped by the Schloß, but how the events that occurred here and the symbolism and memory of this site helped shaped the identity of Berlin.

The Myths and Legends of the Schloß

The impact of this site on Berlin is widely felt physically but perhaps more important is how it has affected the development of identity in Berlin and how it exemplifies Berlin’s ability to weave together myth and fact, legend and history, into a narrative. Throughout the various histories of buildings on this site, events have gained symbolic importance years after they took place and often this symbolic importance does not accurately reflect what happened in actuality. Rather, the symbolism attached to these events has been a way for Berliners to construct a history and an identity that they aspired for instead of the one they had. The rapid pace of physical change that occurred on the site showed that there was a constant effort to create or fabricate a past instead of allowing one to develop organically. Throughout the six hundred years of this site’s history a myriad of myths and legends have developed concerning events that have transpired here, but there are three that fully
exemplify Berlin’s fondness for legends and their tendency to mythologize their own history. These myths are that of the Berliner Unwille, the myths that surround the Schloß and the 1848 Revolutions, and the myths that grew out of 1918 proclamation of a Free Socialist Republic by Karl Liebknecht at the Stadtschloß.

As aforementioned, the initial building located here was the Schloß Zwingburg and it was generally ill-received by Berliners because the Schloß became a symbol of “Irontooth’s” hands-on authoritarian rule that was a significant shift from the less involved style of rule of his predecessors. This new direct style of rule often angered native Berliners and the Schloß was seen as a physical representation of the negative aspects of Irontooth’s reign. In 1447 the citizens of Berlin fought back against Irontooth and his new administrative system by flooding parts of the city in an attempt to destroy the foundation of his new Schloß.\(^{67}\) This one protest holds particular importance for the history and identity of Berlin; it is the birth of the Unwille myth. This myth, which permeates the entirety of Berlin history even to the present, claims that Berliners have always fought against authoritarian rulers and instigated protests and revolutions. Berliners are constantly being cited as defiant and suspicious of all leaders, from Irontooth, to Hitler, to Ulbricht. Yet, Berliners have in actuality been remarkably docile and have never instigated a successful revolution.\(^{68}\)

The myths surrounding the 1848 Revolution and the events that transpired at the Stadtschloß are more difficult to pinpoint because they are still developing today. Today the Stadtschloß is being reconstructed (with modern modifications) in what may be an attempt to find a collective past and identity for Berliners who are still

\(^{67}\) Richie, *Faust’s Metropolis*, 31—32.

\(^{68}\) Ibid., 32.
healing after decades spent in division. The need for a shared past and the hope that the Schloß could offer some stability in the midst of a cultural crisis can explain why there has been a push for this reconstruction but the desire for a collective experience has overshadowed the negative associations of the Stadtschloß. The push for a communal history on which Berlin can build its future forces a mythologization of events so that the Stadtschloß takes on a different meaning in the post-reunification years than it had held before it was demolished in 1950.

The Stadtschloß was by no means universally loved by the citizens of Berlin in the nineteenth century. After the revolutions of 1848, the Schloß became a symbol of the negative aspects of Prussian rule. It became associated with the militaristic, authoritarian and despotic reign of Frederick William IV of Prussia after the revolution erupted at its gate. On March 18, 1848 after the peaceful protests on the Schloßplatz against the conservative authoritarian style of rule, Frederick William conceded to many of the demands of the protestors, agreeing to reform the government and pushing it in a more liberal direction with the possibility of a written constitution. The peaceful mood did not last for long as people were still gathering at the Schloß’s gates. During one such gathering, as the revolutionary slogans were being read two shots rang out. No one is sure from whom these shots came but they transformed the relatively peaceful nature of the protests into violence. Dozens of barricades were constructed in the Schloßplatz leading to a protracted battle. Street battles became commonplace and particular roads gained violent reputations and

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69 Clark, “The Iron Kingdom,” 480.
citizens knew to avoid them. All of this violence resulted in the death of 303 citizens and more mistrust between the people and the ruling dynasty.

Following these “street brawls,” as the conservatives deemed them, Frederick William rescinded his earlier concessions and began a forceful and sometimes violent crackdown of protests. The liberal revolutions of 1848 were unsuccessful in Prussia and the Stadtschloß was seen as the location where the revolution died. Following this it became a loathed symbol of Prussian militarism, oppression, and conservatism. It was at its gates that the revolutionaries of 1848 were given hope of reform by Frederick William IV and at its gates that that hope was shattered. The Stadtschloß itself was imposing and domineering; it took up a prominent part of the city center, there was no way around it. The revolutionaries of Berlin were constantly faced with its presences and with the failure of their revolution and the injustices they still faced. The Stadtschloß would never become a public space; it was thereafter always seen as a symbol of oppression and Prussian authoritarianism. In the following years the building was viewed as a betrayal of the people, as a site of abandonment. The Stadtschloß, which was never a site for the people, became even more removed from the public in the following century.

In the years following the 1871 unification of Germany this building became more and more antiquated; it was increasingly just the Berlin residence of the monarchy and lost much of its political presence. The Reichstag, which stood two kilometers to the west, became the dominant political building in Berlin, especially as

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70 Ibid., 477.
71 Ibid., 481.
Germany became a more liberal, welfare state.\textsuperscript{72} The Stadtschloß, and all it symbolized, did not have a place in the new Germany, nor would it belong in the subsequent Germanys. During the Weimar Republic the building was barley touched—only a small portion of it was used as a museum. Hitler thought it was too reminiscent of Prussia and did not believe he could repurpose the space productively, thus he left it sit empty for years.\textsuperscript{73} The events of the 1848 revolutions tainted this building. In their wake the Stadtschloß lost all its credibility, all of its cultural contributions were seemingly voided.

It was not until it was demolished just over a century later that the attitude toward it shifted yet again. There was a general outcry of the loss for such an iconic and important cultural symbol but necessarily an outcry for the historical importance of the building. Only after it was gone were people able to view the Stadtschloß positively and with nostalgia. While it existed it was tyrannical and overbearing, but in its absence it was culturally vital. Today this building is not remembered as a site of oppression but rather for its potential as a site of reconciliation.

The myths concerning this site have contributed to the development of Berliner identity, yet they also have the potential to serve a political function. One such myth is that of the establishment of the Free Socialist State on November 9, 1918 by Karl Liebknecht from a balcony of the Stadtschloß and the subsequent reverence that was attached to this balcony by Walter Ulbricht in 1950. Following the decision to demolish the remainder of the Stadtschloß by Ulbricht in 1950, he


\textsuperscript{73} Holland, Schnurbgus and Walter, \textit{Das Berliner Schloß}, 24.
announced that the one part of the building that was to be spared destruction was this balcony.\(^\text{74}\)

The decision to keep this one part of the Stadtschloß while condemning the rest of the building to demolition marks this event as not only a political but also symbolic. The overtly Prussian building was being destroyed—that part of history was over—but the part of the building that had an association with the Communist Regime was to be preserved and inserted into the façade of the State Council Building, only feet away from the site of the Stadtschloß. It was to become a sort of shrine for the heroes of the failed 1918 revolution. But, in so doing, the importance of this portal was overemphasized. As has been seen before, an event was taken in Berlin’s history and it was built into something else. It is true that Liebknecht declared the formation of a Free Socialist State from the Balcony of the Stadtschloß on November 9, 1918, a short time after Kaiser Wilhelm had abdicated. However, Liebknecht declared a socialist state a few hours after Phillip Schiedemann had declared the birth of a German Republic on the front steps of the Reichstag to a large crowd.\(^\text{75}\) Liebknecht was a founding member of the Sparticist League, whose demands were not yet known to the public—Liebknecht had only been released from prison days earlier. Schiedemann, however, had a wider reach. He was the deputy chairman of the Socialist Democratic Party (the SPD) and his declaration of the German Republic is frequently treated as the start of the 1918-1919 revolution. Ulbricht’s decision to extract this portal and immortalize it by attaching it to a new


building, giving it a new life, once again demonstrated the flexibility of Berlin’s history, especially given events surrounding the Schloß and the heart of the city. Richie has noted that Berlin was a city of “deliberate manipulation of history,” and this instance embodies this exact sentiment. 

Maintaining Portal IV attached a socialist legend to the Schloß, but demolishing the rest of the building also contributed to the formation of a new legend. The decision, though constantly cited as being necessary and unavoidable, was an overtly politically symbolic one. Walter Ulbricht, as the Hohenzollern Kings before him, was deliberately manipulating the architectural structure of the center of the city to suit his political needs and to reflect the changing times. The transformation of the Schloß in the early eighteenth century had also been politically symbolic—Frederick I was displaying his power and competing with other absolutist kingdoms of the time. The demolition of the Schloß in the mid twentieth century was equally symbolic; it signaled the end of Prussian militarism and the dawn of a new, socialist age that did not have any room for monarchical traditions such as an opulent Schloß.

The building and the site are now layered in so much myth, legend, and actual history to such an extent that it is sometimes difficult to distinguish them from each other. Events surrounding the Schloß have taken on lives of their own and have informed much of Berlin’s relationship with its past in the wake of German reunification. It is a minefield of memory. The buildings that have stood here have been infused with so much symbolism and importance that one must be careful moving forward. There is no simple answer to the question of what belongs on this

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76 Richie, *Faust’s Metropolis*, 869.
site. After German reunification when the public intensely debated the future of the Palast der Republik and the land on which it stood, it became evident that this site has transcended the bounds of history and whatever new structure would be built on this land would have an important role to fill in creating Berlin’s future as much as linking it to Berlin’s past.

Throughout the prolonged debate concerning this site, many additional myths surrounding it began to emerge. Those in favor of retaining the Palast were often accused of attaching false memories to the building, especially with the emergence of the “Ostalgie” phenomenon. Those in favor of reconstruction of the Schloß were also accused of attaching false memories, but to the Prussian Schloß. The negative connotations surrounding the building throughout the Hohenzollern reign were consistently left out of any appeals to reconstruct the baroque Schloß.

While Scheffler was speaking of Berlin when he noted that this city was always in the process of becoming without ever settling long enough to be, the same sentiment can be applied to the Stadtschloß. Berliners have always had a strained, complicated relationship with their past; there have been many tragedies that the city has had to come to terms with, both as perpetrators and as victims. They have always used parts of history to construct an identity, and the myths surrounding the Schloß as well as the Palast have contributed significantly to the development of a new identity in the wake of reunification. Lacking deeper history, they have frequently deployed myth in constructing their identity. The decision to demolish the Palast der Republik in favor reconstruction the Stadtschloß is another part of this pattern, this pattern of

mythologizing the past. The identity of Berlin is constantly being reinvented, much like the plot of land a kilometer and a half east from the Brandenburg gate that has the burden of being the symbolic heart of the city. It seemed only natural that this site would be questioned in the 1990s.
Chapter Two: Palast der Republik versus Berliner Stadtschloß: the ambiguous future of the site post reunification

Between 1990 and 2008 the Schlossplatz was the site of an extensive public debate that concerned the fate of the Palast der Republik and the future of the city center of Berlin. In the wake of reunification Berlin began to transform and heal after decades of division—and many looked to the Palast as an old relic of the loathed East German regime that must be removed from the city center. The city was split; some Easterners felt that the Palast was a constant reminder of a regime that had oppressed them and separated them from loved ones for years, while others had positive memories associated with the building. People often attended weddings or other family events there. They were also able to see foreign films there and eat foreign food. It was a spark of diversity in a city of monotony. Westerners were equally torn on the issue. Moreover, there was no consensus among or within various groups. Westerners and Easterners disagreed vehemently with one another but neither group could propose a united solution. Conservatives and Social Democrats (an ex-Communist party) were much the same. For over a decade the fate of this site was undetermined and it divided a city that was already too familiar with division. The Berlin Wall, erected in 1961 and torn down in 1989, physically divided the city for over a quarter century, but even after the structure itself was removed, division remained. As Svetlana Boym, a German historian who has studied the impact of reunification on Berlin, wrote: “Before 1989 there were two German states but presumably one cultural tradition and one nation. Now it turns out that there is one state with two different nations, with their own cultural traditions and frameworks of
While the city was no longer physically divided, not all of the differences between the East Germans and the West Germans were easily reconcilable just because the wall was reduced to rubble. There were many points of contention and debate that came with reunification, street names, the Soviet monument at Treptow Park, and the East German Foreign Ministry building, to name a few; but one site that had had a deep impact on Berlin for the past five centuries stood out as a particularly difficult contested site. What would be the fate of the Palast der Republik?

The Palast der Republik either inspired loathing or love, very rarely did it inspire ambivalence. So naturally, when Germany was reunified there was an immediate call for its demolition, as well as an immediate demand for its preservation. Those who argued for its demise did so on the grounds of retribution and aesthetics. They called for its demolition as an act of retribution for the 1950 demolition of the Stadtschloß and because the Palast did not match the architectural style of Berlin’s city center, thus disrupting the architectural continuity. But the cry for its demolition indicated something larger.

As has been outlined before, every regime and nearly every leader of Brandenburg, Prussia, or Germany, has altered this site, sometimes as dramatically as tearing a building down or constructing a new one, sometimes as mildly as adding a new pathway or room. Still, each regime has at some point focused its attention on this particular site. So it seemed that it would only be a matter of time until the reunified German government turned its sights on the future of the Palast. Regimes in

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the past used this site to construct history to their advantage, this being a common
trend in Berlin. Alexandra Richie wrote in her extensive biography of Berlin: “Berlin
is a city…of deliberate manipulation of history.” The potential demolition of the
Palast could symbolize various things. It could be seen as a denial of East German
experiences by West Germans, or an attempt to overwrite East German history and
memory and replace with a common, or what was perceived by some to be a
common, experience. Regardless of how it was understood, the demolition or
retention of the Palast would be indicative of how the new German government
would interact with Berlin’s pasts.

How the German government chose to deal with this building and the future
of the site only added to the difficulties. In the twelve years following reunification
dozens of proposals regarding the site would be submitted. The Palast would be
condemned once, saved once, and condemned again. Two architectural competitions
were held aiming to find a solution to this plaguing problem, and a committee would
finally be commissioned to recommend a resolution to the debate, which was
submitted in 2002. That same year the Palast was condemned for good. These
twelve years would shed light on the ways in which Berlin would choose to deal with
issues of collective memory and identity in the immediate wake of reunification. The
debate concerning the Palast der Republik would exemplify Berlin’s tortured
relationship with its past, as well as its fondness for myth making.

*Wilhelm von Boddein and the Förderverein Berliner Schloß*

80 Internationale Expertenkommission (Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und
Wohnungswesen), *Historische Mitte Berlin: Abschlussbericht*. Berlin:
Senatsverwaltung für Stadtentwicklung, April 2002.
The initial wave of sentiment against the Palast began as soon as Germany was once again whole. Swiftly, opponents of the Palast gathered their case against the “visual monstrosity,” that was attributed to the “burdened landscape” of Berlin.\textsuperscript{81} As aforementioned, all the opponents of the Palast did not come from a single group; rather they were a conglomeration of former West Germans and East Germans, an odd combination of conservatives, liberals, and social democrats. And while they agreed that the Palast must go, there was no such agreement on what should take its place. Here is where Wilhelm von Boddien comes into play along with his group of supporters, which would later be named the Förderverein Berliner Schloß (Friends of the Berlin Castle).

Wilhelm von Boddien was born in 1942 in Pomerania but escaped to Hamburg in 1945 when World War Two ended. He grew up in a wealthy family, his father owned his own agricultural machinery firm, which Wilhelm began working for in 1958 and became CEO of the firm, Boddien Land und Kommunaltechnick GmbH in 1970. Von Boddien claims that his initial interest in the Berliner Stadtschloß was sparked from trips to Berlin with his high school class, where he became enamored with Prussian history and architecture.\textsuperscript{82} He was affected by the story of Schloß and its 1950 demolition, and upon reunification he saw an opportunity to rebuild the Schloß on the site of the Palast der Republik. Years earlier, von Boddien had joined the “Freude der Preußchen Schlößer und Gärten” (Friends of Prussian Castles and

\textsuperscript{81} Colomb, “Requiem for a lost Palast,” 286.
Gardens), a group that was dedicated to preserving Prussian architecture. This group inspired von Boddien to create the Förderverein Berliner Schloß in 1992 in the hopes of further pursuing his reconstruction goal. Von Boddien’s agricultural machinery company went bankrupt in 2004 and following this, he became the full-time managing director of the group.83

The Förderverein Berliner Schloß worked tirelessly from 1992 to 2002 to gain public support for the demolition of the Palast and reconstruction of the Schloß. And following 2002 the group embarked on a massive fundraising campaign for the Berliner Stadtschloß.84 Support for this organization came from varied sources within Germany as well as abroad. Prominent foreign politicians, such as former American president George W. Bush, made sizeable donations to the reconstruction campaign, and Henry Kissinger, the German-born former American secretary of state openly supported the Stadtchloß, saying that the reconstruction of the Schloß was “an important part of the heritage of Berlin and of Europe, a heritage that transcends geographical and ideological boundaries.”85 While there was always a dedicated group of people advocating for reconstruction, they were not enough to make this dream a reality, and thus von Boddien and his followers in the years following reunification embarked on a protracted fight to convince the general public as well as

83 Ibid.
the government that reconstruction was the right and only option for the future of this site.

It is important to note here that the case von Boddien was making for demolition of the Palast and reconstruction of the Stadtschloß had gained a significant conservative leaning. Von Boddien has openly claimed his Prussian heritage (his ancestors were Prussian nobility in Mecklenburg), which is often considered a conservative sentiment. The support of Bush and Kissinger, both conservative American politicians, reinforced the idea that reconstruction fell to the right on the political spectrum. While it is true that no political party in Germany could vote decisively on this issue, the majority of the votes for demolition and reconstruction would come from the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), a more conservative party. As time progressed the association between reconstruction and conservatism would increase, especially as opposition to this movement heightened the divide between east and west.

The Palast der Republik, however, still stood in von Boddien’s way. While there were many proposals that envisioned a space which combined the Palast and the Schloß so that they both could exist simultaneously and harmoniously on this site, none gained enough recognition or support to be taken all that seriously. It quickly became a matter of Palast versus Stadtschloß, neither could stand while the other

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stood. The Palast’s doors were closed in late 1990 after toxic levels of asbestos were found in the building, making its future even more uncertain. As the East German Parliament building, its function was lost when East Germany was incorporated into the West. There was no longer an East German State, so the Volkskammer was irrelevant. While asbestos alone is not enough to condemn a building combined with ideological support for demolition, the destruction of the Palast became inevitable.  

Many westerners saw the destruction of the remainder of the Berliner Stadtschloß in 1950 as a deviation from the “normal course of history,” and it was seen as an ideological act of vandalism. When announcing the decision in 1950 to demolish the ruins of the Schloß, Walter Ulbricht said: “our [East German] contribution to progress in the area of architecture shall consist in the expression of what is special to our national culture—the area of the Lustgarten and the Schloß ruin has to become a square for mass demonstration.” At later points, Ulbricht claimed that the ruins of the Schloß were unsalvageable and too expensive to restore and that demolition was the only viable option. This quote, however, was constantly revisited by those that saw this action as having purely ideological roots.

Thus, many proponents of demolition of the Palast and reconstruction of the Schloß initially supported this option on retributive grounds. Joachim Fest, a popular German historian, claimed that: “If the destruction of the Schloß was supposed to be a

89 Boym, *The Future of Nostalgia*, 188.
symbol of its [socialism’s] victory, reconstruction would be a symbol of its failure.”

The leading archaeologist in the excavations of the site said that a reconstruction would be “a statement of victory, to say to the former communists that they failed to eradicate history.” To many, the East German demolition of the Stadtschloß in 1950 was purely ideological and thus a similarly ideology-driven option for the future of the site was proposed: a reconstruction of the demolished Schloß. It appeared that proponents of reconstruction were in support of this option on an eye-for-an-eye basis. That is, the communists destroyed the Schloß as a symbol of their victory and thus it would only be right to destroy the Palast as a symbol of their defeat.

While the fate of the Palast was being debated from a political perspective, von Boddien decided to approach the issue in a different manner. He aimed at getting support of the wider public and in 1993, after a long year of preparation, he hung a 1:1 ratio mock-up of Schlüter’s Berliner Schloß over the temporarily closed Palast. This was an impressive feat, and allowed for the general public of Berlin to see what the Schloß had looked like before it was destroyed in 1950, as very few were able to remember the time when it last

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92 Ibid., 190.
stood undamaged. In this act, von Boddien gained publicity for his cause, and support for the reconstruction increased dramatically. This mock-up was generally well received. It was said that von Boddien “gave the city its very own fairy tale summer…it was an illusion, a fantasy, but exciting.” More importantly it put the idea of reconstruction on people’s minds, and got people talking.

The mock-up of the Stadtschloß did an effective job of gaining publicity and it allowed people to reimagine the city center and in its wake the federal government voted to demolish the Palast. The first vote for demolition, which took place in 1994, would not stick but it demonstrated the eagerness many felt towards demolition. However, in 1994 the vote for demolition was not synonymous with the vote for reconstruction. At this time it was not agreed upon what would take the Palast’s place, it was just agreed that the Palast must go. Quickly, protests began, signatures were gathered, and East Germans and some West Germans who opposed demolition made their voices heard. Fifty-two demonstrations against the proposed demolition took place in the next year, 38,000 signatures were collected and a poll taken months after the vote revealed that 98% of East Berliners rejected demolition. This opposition was direct and effective and in 1995 the decision to demolish was reversed and instead it was decided that the Palast would remain and the government would fund the removal of the asbestos.

As more and more people began to oppose the ideology-based approach to demolition and reconstruction, mainly because this approach created a winner (West

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95 Buttlar, “Berlin’s Castle Versus Palace: A Proper Past for Germany’s Future?” 22.
98 Ibid., 189.
Germany) and a loser (East Germany), proponents of the Stadtschloß began to rely more heavily on aesthetics. With the mock-up still in recent memory (it hung for a total of eight months) people could imagine what the city center of Berlin would look like with the Schloß. It was immediately evident that the architecture of the Schloß matched its surroundings perfectly. By focusing attention on the aesthetics of reconstruction, von Boddien turned the emphasis away from decommemoration of the Palast and towards recommemoration of the Schloß.\textsuperscript{99} Supporters of von Boddein began to claim that it was not necessarily about either building or what it represented but simply that the Palast was the wrong building for the site.\textsuperscript{100} Brian Ladd, a historian of Berlin wrote: “those who longed for a return of a royal palace wished to restore not the monarchy but rather a cityscape and with it a civic wholeness that had been lacking since 1950.”\textsuperscript{101}

Perhaps the idea that the Palast was wrong for this site and that the Schloß was right came from the need of Berliners to find a collective past on which they could build a future. There was a desire to look back to a time of stability before division, before World War Two. The cultural crisis that reunification brought, inspired the need for a collective, shared past, and many thought the Schloß could provide such stability.\textsuperscript{102} However, not all agreed that establishing a collective past would solve the problems of reunification, and many believed that this line of thought would only exacerbate the issues. By attempting to find shared experiences, history,  

\textsuperscript{100} Didem, “The Surfaces of Memory in Berlin,” 27.  
\textsuperscript{101} Ladd, \textit{The Ghosts of Berlin}, 59—60.  
\textsuperscript{102} Didem, “The Surfaces of Memory in Berlin,” 28—29.
and memory, the memories that were unique to East Germans were being overwritten. If demolished, the Palast, which was a uniquely East German building, would be seen as a negation of East German memory. In order to move forward with reunification, both East and West German histories and memories had to be preserved in some viable way. Both people who stood in opposition to demolition and in opposition to reconstruction believed that preservation of the memory was crucial in creating a new Berlin and a new Germany.

Opposition to von Boddien and the Spree Insel Initiative

Wilhelm von Boddein and his supporters were not without opposition, which came from varied and diverse sources. As soon as the fate of the Palast was brought to question, support for the building emerged and the importance of maintaining it was heavily emphasized. Those who supported the building claimed that it was a vital historical place that contributed greatly to the identity of a new Berlin. It was here, in the Volkskammer chamber, that reunification had been voted on. Yet those advocating for preservation of the Palast were not doing so purely on historical grounds. Preservation was demanded for personal and cultural reasons but perhaps the most compelling argument came from those Easterners who felt their memories were discriminated against in reunified Germany. As the euphoria of reunification wore off, Easterners increasingly felt disenchanted with the process as the promises of western prosperity did not come true and as their memories were systematically dismantled.103 Easterners began to look fondly at their communist past, a past they had fought to rid themselves of only years earlier. Saving the Palast could be viewed

103 Colomb, “Requiem for a lost Palast,” 303.
as a way to preserve this memory from the western colonization. Its demolition would only solidify the sentiment that East German memory was inherently less than West German memory. However, opposition to von Boddein and the Förderverein Berliner Schloß did not always mean the opponents were supporting the Palast, but rather that they were against the idea of reconstruction of the Berliner Schloß.

The main group that stood in opposition to the Förderverein Berliner Schloß was the Spree Insel Initiative. Formed in 1993, it was the driving force behind the reversal of the 1994 demolition decision. To this group, the Palast was an important fixture of East German identity and to demolish it would be tantamount to an act of imperialism by the West.\textsuperscript{104} It was believed that East German memory must be preserved, and only East Germans themselves could truly preserve it.\textsuperscript{105} Memory in the post-reunification years could not be left up to the West. Many already felt that there was an emergence of a canonized history that was created by the West Germans without any regards to the actual history of the divided Germanies.\textsuperscript{106} East Germany had already lost all of its traditions and institutions, most gone for the better, but to lose a building that was not closely associated with political corruption and oppression pushed many easterners over the edge. They would not sit idly by and let their history be dismantled.

After the decision to demolish the Palast was reversed, the building would undergo an extensive asbestos removal that would leave it a skeletal version of itself and would cost the government millions. While this undertaking was happening there

\textsuperscript{106} Azaryahu, “German Reunification and the Politics of Street Names,” 490.
was still no consensus on what purpose the site would have. In order to gain ideas and hopefully a solution, a competition was held in 1997 to create a future for the site. The rules to the competition were fairly restrictive, and not all were receptive to them. The main “guidelines” of the competition were as follows: the space must be open to all, it must be a site of reconciliation without winners or losers, it must be a mix of education and leisure, it must maintain the respect of the inner city density and former surroundings and it could not contain egocentric architecture.  

While these rules were fairly vague, they still angered potential competitors. Daniel Liebeskind, the famed Polish-American architect whose buildings would play a critical role in the reconstruction process of Berlin, stated that these rules were “a total erasure of fifty years of history of this city. [They were] going back to a time when things were not problematic, coupled with an authoritarian ideal of how to develop the city.” This “authoritarian ideal” that Liebeskind mentioned, speaks of a persistent theme throughout Berlin’s history with this particular site. The idea that a government can dictate how a site, especially a site as symbolically charged as this one, will be developed and put to use to best reflect what the government wants to convey about the state is not a new concept in Berlin. Erich Honecker built the Palast to idealize the GDR. Walter Ulbricht razed the ruins of the Schloß to show the triumph of socialism. Before them, Prussian Kings and Electors of Brandenburg erected and altered the magnificent Schloß to emphasize their power, opulence, and culture. The government of Berlin in the 1990s was now seemingly participating in this long tradition. The desired results of their competition would hopefully convey

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108 Ibid., 33.
reconciliation and freedom and somehow heal the scars of the city. But by having such rules and regulations on the site the government was acting in a similar way to their forefathers and thus ultimately upholding the “authoritarian ideal of how to develop” Berlin.

A total of 14 firms participated in this competition yet no winner was announced and no conclusion reached.\textsuperscript{109} When the competition concluded in late 1997 the fate of the site remained as uncertain as it had before.

However, while the debate was extensive and seemingly without an end, there were some advantages that came with this public debate. For the first time, the general public was given a voice about the architecture in the city center. It was not merely mandated from above but rather Berliners had some power in determining what their city would be. The Spree Insel Initiative’s success in reversing the 1994 decision proved that citizens had a voice. The issues of Berlin’s identity were being vocalized for the first time, and there was a willingness to ponder what reconstruction of the Schloß, or retention of the Palast, would mean for the development of identity in post-reunification Berlin among the general public.\textsuperscript{110} Creating an identity for a city proved to be slow work, and thus the issues was not quietly settled but hotly debated. Eastern voices, which had long been oppressed and silenced by their own government, were being heard. And they were angry and disappointed with the treatment they were receiving by the west.

The feeling of colonization of the East by the West was pervasive, and many Easterners felt that their memories and experiences were being ignored in the wake of

\textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 33.
\textsuperscript{110} Neill, “Places Visions and Representational Landscapes,” 400—401.
reunification. Many people claimed that, “the West wished to rid the city of the memory of the GDR, to establish new functions and meanings as if the GDR had never existed. This, it was argued, was insensitive to the meaning invested in the built environment by Easterners, and the built environment’s role in acknowledging of experience out of which identity is formed.”¹¹¹ This built environment included the Palast. The Palast truly was a “People’s Palace;” it was not a building that was deeply associated with the negative aspects of the East German regime. In 1976 when the Palast was completed, Erich Honecker, the incumbent General Secretary, stated that, “the Palast will be a house of the people, a place of vibrant political and cultural life. This house stands on historic ground”¹¹² The one political association with this building was the Volkskammer, the East German Parliament. However, this political body was nothing more than a rubber-stamp parliament which had no say in any decisions it supposedly made. Beside this one vaguely political aspect, the building was reserved for the East German people, not the East German regime.

This was the main argument of those who wanted to retain the Palast. They argued that it was not a place of oppression and backwardness that so many other structures built during this time were, but rather it was a place of celebration, and a

¹¹² Ibid., 183.
rare one at that. While this was accepted as a valid argument in the mid 1990s, many questioned the validity and sincerity of East German’s loyalty towards the Palast. It was hinted that the Palast was really just a “Potemkin Village,” meaning that it was erected in order to mask the evil taking place behind it. Therefore, in effect, its purity as a people’s palace was tainted. Others thought that the nostalgia attached to the Palast only came about post-reunification and was used as a ploy to push an agenda. Alexandra Richie wrote that the Eastern attachment to the Palast was “dangerous and promotes a lingering fondness for a regime that does not deserve the loyalty of its people.” In the years immediately after reunification, the voices against the Eastern attachment to and nostalgia for this building continued to increase and the fate of the Palast continued to remain uncertain.

While the debate concerning this site was predominantly divided into two camps (pro Palast, or pro Schloß), there were other options that were to be considered. What if neither building was right for the site, and what if neither building could adequately represent what the future of Berlin would be? Could any new building truly fill the void and help heal the center of Berlin?

*Four Plans*

Throughout the remainder of the 1990s and into the twenty first century, four main options for the future of this site emerged, all of which would say something different and unique about the city of Berlin and the way in which history and collective identity is dealt with here. All of the four options were seriously considered

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115 Richie, *Faust’s Metropolis*, 873.
and as the city of Berlin began to heal in the wake of reunification, this site was used as a focal point for public debate that shed light on the issues of reunification, as well as the problems that memory and history posed in such a charged space as Berlin and Germany as a whole. These four options highlighted the varying ways that Berlin could heal and the ways in which it could begin to deal with its most recent pasts.

The first option was perhaps the simplest: it was to rid the Palast of asbestos and retain the building. It would be repurposed but would remain a dominantly public space with a mixed emphasis on education and leisure. Between 1995 and 2000 this appeared to be what would happen to the site. The government of Berlin was pouring money into the Palast make it habitable again and while there was still debate about the sites future, those who supported the Palast argued that because the government had already spent around 3 million euros making the building safe, the expense of a demolition could not be justified.

The second option was to rid the Palast of asbestos and create a hybrid type structure of the Palast and the Schloß. This option was highly idealistic and had varied and little support. Some thought that this would leave the wounds of Berlin open and incapable of healing, while others thought that this hybrid building would be a perfect marriage of division and unification.116

The third option was to demolish the Palast and create an entirely new building on the site. However, getting an agreement on preservation or demolition of the Palast was proving to be difficult, so it was widely thought that a majority would never be able to approve a new building. People questioned how an entirely new

building would capture the identity and culture of Berlin. Others believed that a new structure, or perhaps an open space such as a public park, would be the only solution to this issue. To them, only a new structure with a new purpose could appropriately exist on this site in the New “Berlin Republic.”

The fourth option was to demolish the Palast and reconstruct a modified version of the Berliner Schloß. While no one argued for a reconstruction of the Schloß exactly in its original form with its original purpose, many supported this option. It was believed by many that the Stadtschloß had been a symbol of a united, strong Berlin, and the absence of the Schloß was a monument of division. Placing the Schloß back in the center of Berlin would declare once again that Berlin was whole and standing together.

The second and third options quickly lost what support they had, and it became a matter of Palast versus Stadtschloß. Very few people believed that an entirely new building could adequately fill the hole in Berlin’s city center and thus the idea fell quickly out of favor. A modern building was viewed as risky and potentially embarrassing. Among the few who did support a new structure and purpose for this site was Daniel Liebeskind. He did not favor the construction of a new building but instead favored the demolition of the Palast and the creation of a large empty space that could be used as a public park. This open space, he hoped, would be a tangible void in Berlin’s center that would most aptly represent the trauma that Berlin had

117 Ibid., 186—187.
120 Ladd, Ghosts of Berlin, 65.
been through. However, this idea never gained popularity because it would allegedly not fit within the fabric of Berlin’s city center and would appear desperately out of place. The idea to create a hybrid building of the Palast and the Schloß also never gained much support. It was marketed as an idealistic solution that would placate everyone. Many simply viewed it as a weak compromise or the path of least resistance.

What remained were two polarizing choices, either the Palast or the Schloß. Neither could stand while the other survived. But the choice was not as simple as that. If the Palast was going to be preserved, how exactly would that space be repurposed? What would maintaining such a socialist building say about Berlin and its relationship with its past? If the Schloß was reconstructed, what form would it take? How could it be reconstructed without showing resurgence in Prussian spirit and German nationalism, which were sentiments that were still cautiously avoided? These questions made it nearly impossible to decide what would happen to this site.

Those who supported the reconstruction of the Schloß claimed that—Berlin was born from the Schloß, and without it, Berlin had no point of origin and no heart. They claimed further that the Stadtschloß was more divisive in its absence than it would ever be in existence. Moreover a reconstruction of the Schloß would be able to provide a “proper past for Germany’s future.” However, none of these claims were widely accepted and were constantly countered. East Berliners

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122 Siedler, “Das Schloß lagt nicht in Berlin,” *Berliner Extrablatt*.
comprised the majority of people who opposed reconstruction but another, perhaps more influential group also rose up against it.

Artists and architects had come to an agreement, in the 1964 Charter of Venice, that all reconstruction work should be ruled out “a priori.” Only assembling from original, but dismembered parts was permitted, and the plan to reconstruct the Schloß included the creation of an entirely new building based upon the layout of the previous ones. The Historical Commission of Berlin, the Academy of Arts of Berlin and the Berlin Chamber of Architects all opposed reconstruction on this basis. These artists viewed a reconstruction as a falsification of history. The president of the Berlin Chamber of Architects, Cornelius Hertling stated “We find it unacceptable that buildings that have become a part of urban history are being erased from memory precisely because they are historically burdened. History and identity are therefore being eradicated.” Frank Gehry, one of the most well known architects of the twentieth century, stated that, “destroyed historical buildings should not be reconstructed in their original form.” Once destroyed, he believed, a building could never be recreated in its prior form truly but could only ever be a cheap imitation.

These groups of artists and architects believed that reconstructing the Schloß would only contribute to the falsification of the previous fifty years of history as well.

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126 Wise, Capital Dilemma, 111.
as partaking in “normalization by amnesia.” Because westerners felt that Palast was an irreconcilable deviation from what they perceived was the normal course of history, demolishing the Palast and reconstructing the Schloß would put them back on the correct historical course. Yet by doing so, they would be overwriting years of history that could not be ignored. Besides this act of historical vandalism, they would also be falsifying a different history—the history of Prussia. Reconstruction would contribute to the ‘disneyfication’ of Prussian memory. It would make this memory more palatable to the current German population when in actuality the history of Prussia is weighed down by a troubling legacy of authoritarianism, militarism, and war.

The Stadtschloß itself was not always a celebrated fixture of Berlin. It was loathed upon its conception in the mid fifteenth century and even partially destroyed by the citizens of Berlin in the 1447 revolt. As the building morphed into the baroque Schloß it was when it was destroyed, it became closely associated with the negative aspects of Prussia’s history. It was seen as an oppressive building that embodied the inherent militarism of the Prussian state. In the wake of the failed 1848 revolutions when dozens were killed in the yard before the Schloß and King Frederick IV rescinded his earlier commitment to revolutionary reform, the Schloß became even more deeply associated with the Prussian authoritarianism. Yet, in the wake of reunification, the loathing and fear that this building once inspired seemed to be forgotten in favor of its aesthetic contributions. Claims that the Schloß preceded Prussian militarism, or that the Schloß was the only building that could restore

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balance to Berlin’s city center emerged and little attention was given to what the
building had come to represent in the last century of Prussia’s existence. Prominent
voices, such as Wolf Jobst Siedler were coming out in favor of the Schloß. Siedler
believed that modernism had failed Berlin and only the Schloß could return any
coherence to the city center. After the painful division of the previous forty years,
many believed that tradition would be the only way to heal the city and that the
Schloß represented a more substantial and worthy tradition than the Palast.

While the building and its purpose were inherently German and political, to
deny their nationalistic meaning was seen as foolish. However, people fostered the
belief that while the purpose of the building was nationalistic, the actual architecture
of the building reflected a wider European style. Dieter Hoffman-Axthelm, a
freelance architecture critic believed that the baroque architecture that would be
recreated on the Schloß was more about European identity than it was about German
identity. This argument attempted to eliminate the claim against reconstruction
because it was dangerously nationalistic by saying that, in fact, it was not nationalistic
at all. In addition to this argument, it was made clear that the interior of the potential
new Schloß would have no similarities with the old Schloß. There was at this time no
agreement on what the interior should be, but it would certainly be a public space,
potentially housing museums and some form of public park as opposed to what the
interior had been in the past.

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Interestingly enough, this was the same concept for the interior of the repurposed Palast. What the buildings housed was not the issue, but rather what the image and structure of the building would say about Berliner identity and Berlin’s relationship with its past. There was one camp that thought the tradition the Schloß brought was best suited to healing the wounds of the city, but many others believed that the removing the Palast would create more wounds than it would heal.\textsuperscript{133}

In the latter half of the 1990s, the Palast became even more symbolically charged. As reunification proved to be a more arduous process than anticipated, the Palast took on an even more important symbolic function. It became a symbol of “the lost denigrated, or ignored cultural experiences of a generation of East Germans.”\textsuperscript{134} The Palast, in its now skeletal, gutted form was a symbol of defeat and trauma, of division and isolation, and of eastern victimhood.\textsuperscript{135}

To some, reconstruction of the Schloß would give Berlin a proper past, and it would provide a foundation on which to build a city that had never been walled—to build a new Berlin.\textsuperscript{136} But Berlin had a past. Its past was unpleasant, and riddled with scars but it belonged to Berlin. Berlin had been walled. Because the wall did not physically exist throughout the long years of the debate did not mean that it had never existed. The Palast was a piece of standing history, and to destroy it would be to disrespect the ghosts of history and the collective experiences of present day East Berliners.

\textsuperscript{133} Neill, “Memory, Collective Identity, and Urban Design,” 187—188.
\textsuperscript{134} Colomb, “Requiem for a lost Palast,” 301.
\textsuperscript{135} Sandler, “Counterpreservation,” 693.
In the late 1990s there seemed to be no end to the debate. Dozens of petitions had been submitted to the German Parliament to place the Palast under historical protection, and dozens had been submitted requesting its demolition due to its environmental hazards.\(^{137}\) However, no decision was made, and it was unclear if one was to come in the near future. The Palast was officially rid of asbestos by 2000, but it sat empty, a shell of a building, its interior entirely gutted. It was in this year, as Berlin settled into its new role as capital of reunified Germany, that the federal government commissioned a committee, comprised of architects, historians, archeologists, and politicians to offer a recommendation for the future of this site. This committee would ultimately recommend that the Palast be demolished and that a modified version of the Berliner Schloß be built on the site.\(^{138}\)

\textit{A Landmark Decision}

It was only after more than a decade of intense, heated debate in both the public and the private sectors that a decision was reached about the fate of the Palast.


\(^{138}\) Internationale Expertenkommission, \textit{Historische Mitte Berlin Abschlussbericht}. 67
and the plot of land that had become so highly symbolic in Berlin. Following the recommendation of the committee created to find a solution to the “Schloßplatz problem,” the German Parliament voted in favor of *dismantling (demontage)*, not demolishing, the Palast and reconstructing a modified version of the Schloß on the site. The exact design for the Schloß was still left up to question; it would not be until 2008 that architect Franco Stella would win the international competition with his three-façade design. Many of the rules that had been outlined for the 1997 competition would still be upheld: the site would be a public space that emphasized education and leisure and it would uphold the architectural integrity of Berlin’s city center. But this did not necessarily mean the debate over the site was finished.

The Palast had been condemned once before and had been saved. But there was a crucial difference in these two condemnations. The first one was rushed into. Facing immediate pressure from von Boddein and his group, and with seemingly little opposition to his plan, the federal government (the Deutscher Bundestag) voted the Palast should be destroyed. The asbestos made the building a dangerous hazard, and demolition seemed the easiest course of action. However, as pressure to reverse the decision increased, the government reconsidered. This pressure, coupled with the fact that dozens of buildings in West Germany were revealed to have similar, if not higher, levels of asbestos, incited the government to reverse its decision.\(^{139}\) While this precedent was encouraging to the Palast supporters in the wake of the 2002 vote, these two decisions were not entirely similar.

The 2002 vote was not rushed into. Years of thought had been put into this vote, and an expert committee had recommended the demolition, citing that ultimately the Palast would be worse for the future of Berlin than the Schloß. The Schloß had more potential for tourists and bringing in revenue to the state.\textsuperscript{140} The city center of Berlin was not whole without the Schloß. The reconstruction would bring architectural continuity to the city and would be more aesthetically pleasing than the old Palast. The committee also believed that a reconstruction of the Stadtschloß in its entirety would be criminal and the only way to bring the Stadtschloß into the twenty first century would be to partially reconstruct the exterior while creating an entirely new interior. They ultimately recommended that three facades should be reconstructed in the form of Schlüter’s baroque Schloß and that the fourth façade be a modern design, signifying the Stadtschloß’s movement towards modernity.\textsuperscript{141} The interior was also to be completely modern and have little resemblance to the interior of Schlüter’s Schloß.

Naturally, this decision was not well received by all parties. Some thought the partial reconstruction was criminal and fatal to the integrity of the Schloß.\textsuperscript{142} Von Boddien and his group, while content with the outcome, continued to lobby for a more accurate reconstruction. They accepted the three-façade approach but hoped to raise funds so that parts of the interior would be historically accurate.\textsuperscript{143} And many

\textsuperscript{140} Internationale Expertenkommission, \textit{Historische Mitte Berlin Abschlussbericht}, 19—20.
\textsuperscript{141} Ibid., 57.
still protested the imminent demolition of the Palast. Protests were held for the next three years and questions about the legitimacy of this “expert” committee were raised. Two artists who supported the Palast placed in large wooden letters the word “Zweifel” (doubt) on the roof of the Palast in the hopes that the decision to demolish would continue to be questioned and countered. Another protest placed dozens of washing machines outside the doomed Palast, as if to imply that the government was laundering memory. These protests fell on deaf ears. The last petition to reverse the decision was denied in 2005 and it was clear that the demolition of the Palast was now inevitable.

The Schloß would exist again, in an altered form, and Wilhelm von Boddien and the Förderverein Berliner Schloß had won their long fight and would continue to raise funds and be involved in the reconstruction process for years to come. However, the journey of this site was not nearly over. While it was decided that the Schloß

145 Ibid., 322.
would exist physically, it was not decided exactly what the Schloß would hold. It was also not clear where the funds for demolition and reconstruction would come from, or what would become of the site as these important details were worked out. It was understood that the Schloß would not have any resemblance in purpose to the previous Berliner Schloß, but that still left a host of possibilities for its future. After the decision was reached in 2002 a decade transpired before construction on the Schloß began. In these ten years the future of the site would be determined. Berlin had a chance to construct a new space in the city center that could uniquely contribute to the formation of a new Berliner identity. Berlin was the new capital of a new Germany. And as so many governments had before, their sights were turned on this symbolically charged plot of land located in the heart of the city. This plot of land was once again being used to demonstrate the ideals of the new government.
Chapter Three: The Humboldt Forum and the Future of Memory in Berlin: the plans for the future of the site

As a non-profit foundation, the prospective proprietor of the Berlin Palace-Humboldt Forum, we are creating the greatest cultural development of the early 21st century, on one of the central sites of the Federal Republic. The building’s challenging contents plus the idea, both reconciliatory and forward looking, of dedicating the heart of the capital city to the cultures of the world will give this site an international resonance.

– Humboldt Forum Mission Statement

As discussed in Chapter Two, it was decided in 2002 that some version of the baroque Stadtschloß was to be reconstructed on this site. This decision, while not uncontested, was the final decision concerning the Palast der Republik and its ultimate demise. The Schloßplatz’s aesthetic transformation was important for the identity of Berlin as well as important in revealing the way in which Berlin tends to alter recent history for political needs. This elision is usually tied up with architecture and the visual interpretation of the city and while the aesthetic of the Berlin skyline and the city’s center is crucial to the city’s identity, it is also important to understand how sites are used and what these uses say about certain spaces. One of the main pillars for the argument of reconstruction was that while the exterior would match that of the Prussian Stadtschloß, the interior would not bear a significant resemblance in aesthetic or purpose to the Schloß of Prussian times. The exterior and interior of the site would not necessarily be correlated.

Reconstructing a building whose main purpose was housing the monarch in a monarch-less state seemed, to many, peculiar at best and unnecessary at worst.146

While for the vast majority of the Schloß’s history it was a monarchical residence,

146 Ladd, The Ghosts of Berlin, 60.
there were points in recent history when the Schloß was put to other uses. Following the abdication of Kaiser Wilhelm in 1918, Germany was a state without a monarch, and the Schloß was a palace without an inhabitant. Neither the leaders of the Weimar Republic, the Nazis, nor the Soviets in the immediate aftermath of World War Two, had political need for the building, so the Schloß was transformed into something non-political.

During the Weimar Republic, the site was predominantly used as a museum that was opened to the public on September 1, 1921. This museum put on display much of what the abdicated Kaiser had left behind when he fled for the Netherlands. This included furniture, paintings, and decorative pieces all arranged as if the imperial family still lived in the space. As of 1926, the majority of the first floor could be viewed as “Historische Wohnräume” (Historical living rooms) that had had been used by the imperial family in the years preceding World War One. This museum was the first time that the general public was welcome inside the Stadtschloß and it set an important precedent for years to come.

The Nazis had hardly anything to do with the castle; Hitler never once stepped foot in the Schloß. Because the Stadtschloß remained untainted by the Nazis, it made it easier to repurpose the space after World War Two. In post reunification years, reconstruction of the Schloß was in part so popular because it was never associated with Hitler and his party. Immediately after the war the space was again used as a form of museum. The damage that the Schloß suffered in the bombings of

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147 Richard Schneider, *Das Berliner Schloß in historischen Photographien*, (Berlin: Lukas Verlag, 2013), 17.
148 Ibid., 17.
149 Ibid., 18.
February 1945 was not so severe that the building could not be used at all. The museum in the late 1940s was not a celebration of those who had lived here as it had been in the Weimar Republic but rather devoted to an exhibition of art that the Nazi’s had collected (seized or stolen) and deemed as ‘degenerate.’\textsuperscript{150} Besides this museum of ‘degenerate art,’ there were four other exhibitions in the space between August of 1946 and March of 1948. In August of 1946, Hans Scharoun, an architect and a member of the city council, organized and opened an exhibition called “Berlin plant” (Berlin plans) which showed what Berlin could look like in the future when the damages of the war were gone. This was a massively popular exhibit because it allowed for the citizens of Berlin to imagine what their city could look like without the devastation that was presently surrounding them. Later in 1946 the exhibit “Moderne französische Malerei” (Modern French Painting) opened and it would prove to be a large success as well.\textsuperscript{151} Those that saw this exhibition claimed that it was an “enchanting exhibition of French paintings” that “was arranged in the Schloß, which gave us renewed hope for life, and which indicated to us, that after dictatorship and defeat we could take part again in European affairs.”\textsuperscript{152} In the following two years there would also be a memorial to the 1848 revolutions on this site and an exhibition of pre-war Berlin. In addition to these exhibitions, the Stadtschloß was also used as a backdrop to the Soviet Propaganda film, “The Battle of Berlin.”\textsuperscript{153}

\textsuperscript{150} Boym, \textit{The Future of Nostalgia}, 179.
\textsuperscript{151} Schneider, \textit{Schloß in historichen Photographien}, 18.
\textsuperscript{152} Rodemann, \textit{The Palace of Berlin and its Downfall}, 14—16.
\textsuperscript{153} Renate Petras, \textit{Das Berliner Schloß: von der Revolution 1918 bis zur Vernichtung 1950} (Berlin: Verlag Bauwesen, 1999), 110.
However, the Schloß was not destined to survive the division of Germany into two states. It was demolished in 1950 by the new GDR. Nevertheless, now there was a precedent of this building being used for public, cultural events, and exhibitions and for the remainder of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, it would always remain (at least some parts of it) a public space. The Palast der Republik, later built on the site, while housing the Volkskammer, would still remain a space open to the public. It was not the most political building in the German Democratic Republic; rather many would argue it was inherently un-political.\textsuperscript{154} Other buildings were far more important when crafting East German political policy, and this building was really only home to the rubber-stamp Parliament. No decisions were actually made in the Palast.\textsuperscript{155} It was instead a true “People’s Palace.”

Because there was already a precedent set in the immediate post war years as well as during the German Democratic Republic, of the building and the space being used for cultural, non political events, in the wake of reunification as the debate over this site heightened, it became clear that the physical site did not have to remain abandoned. Even though there was no conclusion yet on the fate of the Palast, there were many who advocated for the use of the building while the questions concerning its future were settled. Of course, the issues of asbestos had to be addressed before the building could be opened again to the public; but after the 1995 reversal of the 1994 decision to demolish the Palast, the federal government embarked on a long process to remove all asbestos from the Palast. From 1990 to 2002 the building was closed to the public until it could again be safely used. Once the building was cleared of

\textsuperscript{154} von Buttlar, “Berlin’s Castle Versus Palace,” 22.
\textsuperscript{155} Urban, \textit{Neo—Historical Berlin}, 163.
asbestos, there was a clamor to again use the space. Unfortunately, that was in 2002, the same year that it was once again condemned to destruction. Due to significant budget constraints and shortfalls, demolition was severely delayed but the building could be used in the interim.

While the funds were being assembled for the ‘dismantling’ of the Palast, it sat empty and hollow, and there was a prolonged push for the space to be used during this time. While demolition was originally scheduled for 2006, it was always acknowledged that finding the funds for the process could take longer and the Palast could potentially remain standing for a significant period. Instead of letting it remain a shell of a building, there was an effort to repurpose the space. By that point the site had not been the residence of the Hohenzollern family for over eighty-five, years and in those years it had often been used as a public space, promoting art and culture. Between 2002 and 2008, the site would yet again be used in such a way.

Three of the more notable events that took place in the hollow Palast were the Chinese Terracotta Army Exhibition, a performance of the Berlin based band Einstürzende Neubauten, and the performances of the Berliner Orchestra. The Terracotta Army exhibition was on display in the Palast in late 2004 and while it only remained in Berlin for a short period, it gave the site a new international, non-European, resonance that it did not previously have. These exhibitions and performances were popular and they allowed for the space to be continuously used as it awaited its destruction.

156 Colomb, “Requiem for a lost Palast,” 289.
In the following years, when the Palast had been demolished and the Schloß’s reconstruction was imminent, more attention was being given to how the space would be used, rather than what the space would look like. Following demolition, the site was “laid out in a minimal pastoral style with wooden platforms,” and the Berlin Monument Authority undertook extensive archeological excavations.\footnote{Manfred Rettig, *Das Berliner Schloss wird zum Humboldt Forum: Rekonstruktion und Transformation der Berliner Mitte* (Berlin: Stiftung Humboldt Forum, 2011), 10.}

According to official guidelines, the site was to be dedicated to the public and promote education and culture, but those were rather loose guidelines.\footnote{Marshall, “The Palaces of Central Berlin,” 55.} When coming to a decision on the use of the site, politicians and city planners would revisit the previous century and draw on the tradition of museums and culture that the site had contracted.\footnote{Sean Franzel, “Recycling Bildung from the Humboldt Forum to Humboldt and Back” *A Journal for Germanic Studies*, 50, no. 3 (September 2014), 383.} While the traditions of the site were highly political and always deeply associated with the various regimes of Germany over the past five hundred years, there was now also a long-standing tradition of education, culture, and openness that the site could now claim. As the planners for the site began to move forward, they took this tradition seriously and emphasized that the site was for everyone. They attempted to quell any uneasiness about reconstructing a monarch’s residence in a state without a monarch by claiming that though the Schloß had been an elite building at one point, it also had been a museum in the 1920s and again in the late 1940s. This precedent of public access would be important in the development of a plan for the future of the reconstructed Schloß.
Franco Stella and the New Palace

While the shell of the Palast der Republik was being repurposed in the interim years before demolition, there was a prolonged search and a competition was held for the ideal candidate to design the modified Berliner Stadtschloß that would sit on the site in the years to come. Long before the final competition was held, it was stipulated that the space must be a public one and Italian architect Franco Stella, a competitor and the eventual winner, made sure the public aspects of the building were a dominant part of his design. Stella, however, was an interesting choice for architect because he was not German. He is native to Vicenza, Italy and while it has never been addressed that his nationality played a role in his selection, it was not a fact to be ignored.

The competition was initiated in late 2007 and at the urging of the German Parliament, it was to be an international one.\textsuperscript{161} There were, however, binding conditions to the competition: “the reconstruction of the historic facades on the building’s south-west and north sides and of the three historical baroque facades of the Schlüterhof.”\textsuperscript{162} Along with these aesthetic stipulations, it was also specified that museums and the Humboldt University would use the building. The hope was, as claimed by Manfried Retting the CEO of the Humboldt Forum (which was not formed until late 2009), “for the Berlin Palace Humboldt Forum to be recognizable, both internally and externally, as a combination of a partial reconstruction and a new building. The element of twentieth-century German history expressed in the

\textsuperscript{161} Rettig, \textit{Das Berliner Schloss wird zum Humboldt Forum}, 22.
\textsuperscript{162} Ibid., 6.
destruction of the Schloß was not, therefore, to be entirely concealed by the
reconstruction of the baroque facades—instead, it was to be made visible as a contrast
to the past and present.” The modern façade was to resist any historical imitation of
the old parts of the building while maintain a respect for the reconstructed baroque
façades. By reconstructing only part of the baroque façade and melding it with a
modern, yet to be designed façade, it was thought that history and modernity could
blend together on this site, sitting harmoniously with one another.

From December 2007 to November 2008, 129 designs were submitted and on
November 28, 2008 the jury of the committee convened to vote on a design. The jury
was made up of architects such as Magnago Lampugnani from Milan, David
Chipperfield from London, Peter Kulka from Dresden and H.G. Marz from
Stuttgart. In 2008, the search concluded with the appointment of Franco Stella and
his architectural firm as the architect of the new building. The jury deciding the
competition was made up of experts and politicians, such as Cultural Minister Bernd
Neumann (CDU) and Federal Construction Minister Wolfgang Tiefensee (SPD).

The decision was unanimous. It was believed that Stella masterfully incorporated old
and new and infused the building, which had to have three original baroque facades,
with a much-needed hint of modernity. Stella’s design was popular because of the
way in which he transformed the historically private Schloß into a public space. He

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163 Ibid., 18.
http://www.spiegel.de/kultur/gesellschaft/berliner—stadtenschloss—italiener—sollen—
  wiederaufbau—uebernehmen—a—593258.html.
165 Rettig, Das Berliner Schloss wird zum Humboldt Forum, 22.
http://www.sbs—humboldtforum.de/de/Stiftung/Stiftungsrat/.
created a network of pathways into the center of the courtyard that would be accessible to everyone.\textsuperscript{167} To further emphasize their confidence in the design and the outstanding quality of his work, they did not award a second prize. The jury believed that “the way the new elements respond to their historic architectural principles- the dialectic of ‘wall’ and ‘pillar’ was positively received,” and that Stella’s design would effectively transform the new Schloß into a melding of history and modernity that would breathe new life into Berlin’s city center. The jury did, however, impose some reworking of the winning design. Mainly that Stella change his current design of the east façade so that it could be a viewing structure as well as a creation of a space for a special exhibition of the finds unearthed on the building site during construction.\textsuperscript{168}

The selection of Franco Stella and his design was well received especially by those who supported the reconstruction of the Schloß from the early days of reunification. Wilhelm von Boddien, the founder and president of the Förderverein Berliner Schloß, noted that

\begin{figure}[h]
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\textsuperscript{167} Ibid., \textsuperscript{168} Rettig, \textit{The Berlin Palace Becomes the Humboldt Forum}, 12.
“November 28, 2008 is a day of joy.”\textsuperscript{169} Von Boddien went on to call Stella a “great, sensitive man: he recognizes the architectural quality of the old castle and pays its builders much deserved respect.”\textsuperscript{170} In the weekly newsletter that von Boddien and his group publish, the entire newsletter the week following the jury’s decision was devoted to praising Stella’s design and publicly endorsing it.

As mentioned before, it is perhaps important to note that Franco Stella is an Italian architect, not a German one. The building, which has an intensely nationalistic history, was constructed by some of the great German architects, such as Andreas Schlüter, Eosander von Göthe, or Karl Friedrich Schinkel. Yet, the reconstruction of this building was given to a foreigner. Because of the taboo subject of German nationalism, perhaps it was deemed too risky to have a German architect design the reconstruction. This hesitation to allow German architects to contribute to the critical reconstruction period of Berlin is not new. It was seen when Norman Foster, an English architect, was selected to design the new plans for the Reichstag, which had much stronger nationalist associations.\textsuperscript{171} Stella’s nationality could have not played a role in his selection, but the fact that he was not German surely could have helped him.

The original design that Stella submitted in December of 2007 was altered significantly in the following six years. With the inception of the Humboldt Forum, Stella had to work with this group that was now commissioning the construction of

\textsuperscript{171} Wise, \textit{Capital Dilemma}, 111.
the Schloß and would be its future owner. Stella’s design was widely popular with those who originally supported reconstruction (such as the Förderverein Berliner Schloß) and the integrity of the design remained much the same in these years, but he had to adapt it to the growing needs of the space.

**The Humboldt Forum**

The Humboldt Forum was formed on July 2, 2009. The responsibilities of this foundation included the construction of the site, the future ownership of the site and the buildings on it, as well as coordinating the interests of the project’s three partners—the Humboldt University Berlin, the Central and Regional Library of Berlin, and the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation. The Forum has high hopes for this site. They recognized that the site has “challenging contents” but hope to “reflect and creatively neutralize the tensions between past and future on this site.”

The Humboldt Forum is comprised of fourteen members—five federal parliament members, three federal government employees, two State of Berlin employees, two Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation members, one member from the Central and Regional Library of Berlin, and one Professor from the Humboldt University of Berlin. This foundation has been charged with the responsibilities of constructing and running the new Berlin-Schloß Humboldt Forum, of coordinating and pooling the interests of the Humboldt Forum’s users, and of setting up and running a permanent exhibition on the “Historic

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173 The members of the Humboldt Forum Council are: Dirk Fischer, Hartmut Koschyk, Michael Groß, Dr. Woflgang Thierse, Heidrun Bluhm, Florian Pronold, Günter Winands, Michael Meister, Regula Lüscher, Tim Renner, Professor Herman Parzinger, Professor Michael Eissenhauer, Volker Heller, and Professor Jan—Hendrik Olbertz.
Heart of Berlin-Identity and Reconstruction.” As well as the present responsibilities, the foundation must also provide information to the public on the plans of the Forum. In the coming years, the Humboldt Forum has plans for a traveling exhibition that will open in Germany as well as in other European countries. The hope of this traveling exhibition is to “steadily increase a positive perception of the project among the general public. Above all, it campaigns to promote the involvement of people in the project.”

Following the November 2008 selection of Franco Stella, the Humboldt Forum Foundation was also formed, and they then spent the next five years diligently configuring the plans for the space: what would go where and how would the composition of the interior best reflect the message they were trying to project. By June of 2013, when Joachim Gauck the President of Germany laid the first brick of the new Schloß, the interior plan was set.

As noted before, the integrity of Franco Stella’s original design that was submitted to the November 2007 competition remained more or less intact, but as the process of finalizing the use of space continued, some alterations were proposed and implemented to make better use of the space being constructed. The eastern façade, which Stella had originally designed as a belvedere, or a “pure viewing structure” comprised of steps and loggias, was transformed after intense debate into an optimized special exhibition and event area. The jury of the competition also argued that the design must include a Site History Museum that would display the finds.

174 Rettig, Das Berliner Schloss wird zum Humboldt Forum, 36.
175 The first stage of the tour includes Paris, Warsaw, Brussels, Budapest, Dublin, Bremen, and Stuttgart.
176 Rettig, Das Berliner Schloss wird zum Humboldt Forum, 12.
unearthed during the archeological excavations of the site between 2008 and 2013.\textsuperscript{177} Other changes were made to Stella’s original design, including but not limited to moving all parts of the events area from the basement to the ground floor, the elimination of a staircase in the main entryway, and links and passageways to the various exhibitions.\textsuperscript{178}

The foyer of the ground floor would be the “main zone” of the building, with the main attraction being an “eye-catching feature in the form of a reconstructed inner portal of the main entrance beneath the dome.”\textsuperscript{179} There will be special exhibition halls on either side of this foyer as well as restaurants on the Lustgarten side. The main staircase, which would remain identical to Stella’s original design, will be visible throughout the height of the building and “with its symmetrical stair and escalator arrangement, it will in itself be an impressive sight.”\textsuperscript{180} The Cabinet of Art and Curiosities as well as the Site History Museum will also be on the ground floor. The former will be located in galleries in the foyer, which gives the latter an “ideal position, directly next to the main entrance of Portal III, linked to the main visitor thoroughfare and the planned ‘archeological window.’”\textsuperscript{181} The ground floor will also include an auditorium that will seat 690 people, multifunctional halls that can hold up to 520 people, a lapidarium, the museum shop, and two restaurants: The Bistro of World Cultures and Restaurant of the Continents.\textsuperscript{182}

\textsuperscript{177} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{178} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{179} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{180} Ibid., 25.
\textsuperscript{181} Ibid., 25.
While much of the ground floor will be responsible for public events and its contents are more likely to change, the upper levels of the Schloß will house more permanent exhibitions. The first floor will include the Ethnological Museum of Oceania (a part of the State Museum of Berlin), specialized libraries of the State Museum of Berlin, and library rooms for the Central and Regional Library of Berlin. The second floor of the Schloß will be entirely dedicated to the Ethnological Museum of Oceania, American, and Africa. The third floor will include the Museum for Asian Art (again, a part of the State Museum of Berlin) and the remainder of the Ethnological Museum of Asia.\(^{183}\)

Significant emphasis was placed on the belvedere because this was the eastern façade of the building, the one façade that was not to be a reconstruction of the baroque Schloß but instead a modern structure. Stella wanted the belvedere to remain an autonomous structure with a distinctly, consciously modern design. This was accomplished by designing a structure with deep, massive outer walls that will emphasize this part of the building’s identity as distinct from the baroque facades, but will be linked to them by referencing the historical construction in its wall thickness. During the revision process, the design was slightly altered so that future generations could reconstruct one of the Schloß’s most “noteworthy features,” the historic “giants-staircase” if they so desired. While this historic staircase might not fit within the architectural context of the modern aesthetic of the belvedere, leaving it open to

\(^{183}\) Rettig, *Das Berliner Schloss wird zum Humboldt Forum*, 36—38.
The Humboldt Forum is also dedicated to authentically reconstructing the Berliner.

Figure 14 The belvedere or Eastern façade of the Humboldt-Forum. Franco Stella, SBS-Humboldt Forum, Das Berliner Schloss wird zum Humboldt Forum, 2 © Berlin Humboldt Forum Foundation/Franco Stella.

Figure 15 The Southern façade of the Humboldt-Forum Franco Stella, SBS-Humboldt Forum, Das Berliner Schloss wird zum Humboldt Forum, 2 © Berlin Humboldt Forum Foundation/Franco Stella.

Figure 16 Northern façade of the Humboldt Forum Franco Stella, SBS-Humboldt Forum, Das Berliner Schloss wird zum Humboldt Forum, 2 © Berlin Humboldt Forum Foundation/Franco Stella.

Figure 17 The western façade of the Humboldt-Forum depicted with the original dome. Franco Stella, SBS-Humboldt Forum, Das Berliner Schloss wird zum Humboldt Forum, 2 © Berlin Humboldt Forum Foundation/Franco Stella.
Stadtschloß and in 2011 they organized the “Schlossbauhütte” (Schloß Workshop) where they emphasized the importance of accurately replicating the decorative elements of the Schloß.\(^{184}\) Much of the original decorative elements of the Stadtschloß had been removed to dump like enclosures on the outskirts of Berlin in 1950 and the Humboldt Forum embarked on a long mission to salvage them.\(^{185}\) These salvaged elements were put on display at this workshop and dozens of artists, architects, and sculptors were invited to study and replicate them. While there are original parts of the Stadtschloß still in existence, the reconstruction will not incorporate them. The reconstructed Schloß will consist of entirely new elements.\(^{186}\)

There is no doubt that the Berliner Schloß is an intensely German site. The building itself has had a deep impact on Berliner identity and the transformation it has seen throughout its nearly six hundred year history offers much insight into issues of the past in present day Berlin. Yet, the dominant presence on the new site will not be German. There will be a permanent exhibition on the identity and reconstruction of Berlin, but this exhibition will take up less than a tenth of the ground floor. The rest of the building is dedicated to cultures of the world. Manfred Rettig, architect and CEO of the Foundation, has noted that he hopes that the Humboldt Forum will carry on in the great republican tradition of using castles as museums, such as the Lourve in


\(^{185}\) Rettig, Das Berliner Schloss wird zum Humboldt Forum, 36—38.

Paris or the Russian Museum in St. Petersburg. The hope is that this site will be a place for everyone and that it will be a site where the cultures of the world can be revered and celebrated.

Overall, the Humboldt Forum and interest groups such as the Förderverein Berliner Schloß are pleased with Stella’s design and the construction plans for the immediate future, but one element of the Schloß that is not being reconstructed continues to be a point of contention. Earlier, in Chapter One, the importance of the Dome on the west side of the Schloß was noted. This dome became synonymous with the Schloß in the late eighteenth century and was presented prominently in nearly every depiction of the Schloß following its completion. However, no funds were set aside to reconstruct the dome in all its former glory. The Humboldt Forum claims that there are enough funds to implement the bare structure of the dome but there is not enough money to appropriately adorn it with the its famed architectural ornamentation. Rettig writes, “Only with a historic dome can the Berlin Schloß-Humboldt Forum inspire the fascination and admiration appropriate to a project like this.” The Förderverein Berliner Schloß is currently attempting to procure private donations so that the dome can be reconstructed appropriately. As of July 2011, the Parliamentary Budget Committee approved the reconstruction of the historic dome

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188 Rettig, Das Berliner Schloss wird zum Humboldt Forum, 27.
but it was expected that the funds to cover this expense would come exclusively from donations.  

As well as pushing to reconstruct the historic dome in its entire former splendor, there is also a desire to reconstruct some of the Schloß’s interiors as they were in the baroque era. While proponents of reconstruction in the late 1990s and early 2000s claimed that the interior of the Schloß would remain an entirely modern space that would not resemble the historic interior, in purpose or aesthetic, these groups are now claiming that “a reconstruction of the interior spaces at some point in the future should not be ruled out.” The debate over how exactly this site will be repurposed and what it will come to represent, it seems, is not quite over. The contested memory of this site may well prove to be a continued issue in the years to come.

While it is not known how the site will evolve in years to come, the Humboldt-Forum has a clear idea for the image they want to present. Plenty of scholars have warned about the dangers of assigning a specific meaning to a specific site, because there is no way to anticipate the ways in which the public will interpret them. Yet the founders of the Humboldt-Forum have a clearly defined meaning they hope the site will take on. They hope that the site will incorporate and represent the ideals of the Humboldt brothers: tolerance, enlightenment, education, open-

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191 Rettig, Das Berliner Schloss wird zum Humboldt Forum, 22.
mindedness, and freedom of intellect. This site will be a celebration of world cultures, as well as a celebration of the German and Prussian tradition of education.

Normalization by Amnesia— “Disneyfication” and Prussia

The name of the Humboldt-Forum is not accidental; it was a definitive way to lay claim to the ideals of the Alexander and Wilhelm Humboldt, brothers who have long been celebrated as a part of Prussia’s great cultural and educational traditions. While the Humboldt brothers have long been celebrated as important cultural figures for their enlightenment-based ideals and for their achievements in education, the great cultural traditions of Prussia have not always been openly celebrated in such a way. Following World War Two there was a clear shift in the way Germans dealt with the memory of Prussia. Prussia was commonly referred to as “not a state with an army, but an army with a state,” and for this reason much of the trauma of the first half of the twentieth century was associated with Prussian militarism. In the wake of World War Two, the German people, both East and West, attempted to distance themselves from their Prussian heritage. Many attributed the Nazi’s rise to power with the precedent of Prussian authoritarianism and thus there was a general denial of Prussia and its heritage in the 1950s and 60s. After Germany was divided into East and West, both states dealt with the negative associations of Prussia differently. In the West, there were fewer concrete steps to remove Prussian memory from the official

state history but a more general avoidance of the subject. However in the East, the steps taken to write over Prussian memory were more visible.

East Germany dealt with the removal of Prussia from the history of the state, in the 1950s. One of the most notable instances of this removal, clearly, was the demolition of the Stadtschloß in 1950. After reunification, many commented on this “political act of vandalism,” claiming that it was an attempt to “eradicate history.” And at the time it did seem that East Germans were attempting to eradicate their Prussian history. Besides this demolition, they also removed the famed equestrian statue of Frederick the Great that stood on Unter den Linden. By removing both structures, which were so deeply associated with Prussian pride and history, it seemed as if the GDR was systematically removing all associations with Prussia.

While the East German state more obviously effaced Prussian memory than the West, they were more closely associated with Prussia to begin with. The majority of East Germany lay in historic Prussia. The West, by nature of geography, did not inherit the same obvious association. Therefore, the East had more memory to rid themselves of and embarked on this long course of altering their collective identity and memories. The East Germans, specifically in Berlin, were nevertheless partaking in a long-standing Berlin tradition of erasure and amnesia. Berlin has been called “the place where one quickly forgets—indeed, it seems as if the city possesses a magical quality to erase all memories. It is the present and exerts all its energies to be as much in the present as possible.” Yet this temporary amnesia would wear off in the years

197 Riche, Faust’s Metropolis, 744.  
to come. Both East and West Germany would come to restore their Prussian past and would come to embrace it to a certain extent. Alexandra Richie claims that the East Germans, due to their geography, had the larger responsibility to deal with their past.\textsuperscript{199} It was their history, and it was time to own it. Beginning in the late 1970s and moving into the early 1980s however, there was a push in East Germany to restore old Prussian monuments that had been removed or neglected in the postwar era. One of the first monuments to be restored was the equestrian statue of Frederick the Great.\textsuperscript{200} This was a hugely symbolic gesture. It showed that the East Germans were coming to terms to their past and not attempting to merely remove it and hide it away from sight. But the East Berliners were not alone in their re-evaluating of their Prussian heritage.

Less than a year after East Germany returned the statue of Frederick the Great to its previous location on Unter den Linden, West Germany held an exhibit entitled, “Prussia: Attempting Re-Assessment.” This exhibit attempted to re-assess and re-evaluate Prussia’s legacy in modern-day Germany. This exhibit was championed by the then mayor of West Berlin, Dietrich Stobbe, who stated, “everywhere in Germany a

\textsuperscript{199} Richie, \textit{Faust’s Metropolis}, 744.  
\textsuperscript{200} Ibid., 745.
growing search for identity is becoming apparent and a growing need to find the historical roots for our present national circumstances.”

At the time of the exhibition in 1981, there was a whole new generation of Germans who were not directly burdened by the Nazi past, and the taboo that had been unofficially placed on the Prussian history was lifted as this generation grappled with their identity as Germans. There was a growing sense that “whether the past was good or bad it was [theirs] and [they] should not forget [their] history.”

Even though the East was going through a similar reassessment simultaneously, this western exhibition was still marketed and viewed fairly negatively in the East. It was viewed as an attempt at a resurrection of Prussian values and a thinly veiled effort to rehabilitate Prussian militarism.

East German journalists, such as Christine Lattek, asked questions such as: “was the exhibition surreptitiously a revival of a furtive reappraisal of militarism and nationalism?”

The exhibit itself attempted to refrain from portraying Prussia in a positive or negative light but claimed that it wanted to show Prussia neutrally and exhibit it as it was, without a political agenda. In the end, it would prove to be nearly impossible to de-politicize such a highly political subject but West Germany did try. While many East Germans claimed that it was a celebration and glorification of Prussia, many of those who actually saw the exhibit said that did not glorify Prussia and avoided taking a definitive stance on any issue. The exhibit was held in a still war damaged building

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201 Lentz, “Prussia Rediscovered in a West German Display.”
204 Lattek, “Preussen: Versuch einer Bilanz,” 177.
205 Ibid., 179.
along the Berlin Wall in order to “remind the public of the devastations of the recent past.” The West Germans who designed the exhibition were not necessarily moving away from the position that the traditions of Prussia significantly contributed to the devastation of the world wars, but they were certainly attempting to re-evaluate Prussia’s place in modern day West Germany and Berlin. There was a sense that this embracing of the past could be a positive change in the way Germans in the postwar era had dealt with their histories. Instead of denying the past, or a general refusal to deal with it or come to terms with it, perhaps opening up the conversation about their complicated, difficult past would be more productive. This is what the 1981 Prussia Exhibit was attempting to do. Because it was not glossing over the nastier bits of history (because the exhibit was physically in a war-torn part of the city, directly adjacent from the Berlin Wall the most visible scar of the twentieth century) the exhibit could celebrate, or at the very least remember other traditions Prussia had left behind. While it was celebrating parts of Prussia’s cultural traditions and history it was also opening up dialogue about the challenging parts. The exhibit also included discussions on the repercussions of Prussian militarism and ways in which that past could be confronted rather than denied. As was noted in the catalogue to the exhibit, “increased interest in the unpleasant parts of German history can only help to stabilize national consciousness.”

Before this reappraisal of German identity in the late 1970s and 1980s, the Prussian legacy had been shifted around so that on either side of the wall Germans

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206 Lentz, “Prussia Rediscovered in a West German Display.”
208 Ibid., 179.
could say, “yes there is a Prussian legacy, but it is not our legacy, it is theirs.” This implied that it was those on the others side of the wall who inherited the dominant legacy of Prussia. West Germans saw the authoritarian style of rule adopted by the East as a direct descendent of Prussian authoritarianism while East Germans saw the capitalist society of the west as stemming from the Prussian economic system of a century earlier. Both of these qualities were considered, by the respective sides, as directly responsible for the traumas of the twentieth. It took decades for Germans on both sides of the wall to re-examine and reevaluate this past, but as shown by the replacement of the Frederick the Great statue by the East and the 1981 Prussian Exhibition of the West, this reappraisal was already well underway.

This reassessment of the Prussian legacy and memory came at a peculiar time in the division years. In the late 1970s and moving into the 1980s, the Cold War was reaching a period of détente and neutrality to an extent not seen before. The Germans had been divided into two states for nearly a quarter of a century and this division was taking its toll. Germans on both sides of the wall were feeling nostalgic about the past, about the time when they were not physically divided by such a seemingly impenetrable structure as the Berlin Wall. This nostalgia coupled with the ongoing détente allowed for a reexamination of the past, specifically the Prussian one. There was clearly still animosity between east and west but the simultaneous rehabilitation of a common past indicated that Germans on both sides of the wall were craving a shared history, and were looking back to Prussia to provide them with one.

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209 Large, Berlin, 477.
The Prussia Exhibition was not the only way in which West Germans were reevaluating their Prussian past. As this exhibition was taking place, books were being published that portrayed Prussia favorably (or at least favorably compared to how it had previously been portrayed), such as Rudolf von Thadden’s *Fragen an Preußen: zur Geschichte eines aufgehobenen Staates*. This book, written in 1981 by a man whose lineage can be traced to a noble family from Pomerania, was an attempt to debunk the popular myths and legends that had accumulated in the post war era about Prussia and show how Prussia played a unique and crucial role in ushering Germany into the modern era.²¹⁰ Von Thadden’s work was important in reinforcing the shift in attitude towards Prussian past but there were other journalists and academics, such as Marion Gräfin von Döhnhoff who were perhaps even more influential.

Marion Gräfin von Döhnhoff was born in East Prussia and fled to the west after the war had ended. She was an influential journalist for *Die Zeit* who had eventually renounced the East Prussian territory that was lost in 1945. For decades after the war Döhnhoff had fought for territorial change to reincorporate these lost lands but realized that she had to renounce these claims to avoid the possibility of “revenge and hatred.”²¹¹ But she continued to maintain the importance of Prussian history and blamed Hitler’s “madness and brutality” for the loss of centuries of German history in the East.²¹² She refused to believe that the East was lost forever and was a proponent of *Ostpolitik*, which was a push to normalize relations between

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²¹² Ibid., 255.
the FRG and the GDR that had been spearheaded by Chancellor Willy Brandt.\textsuperscript{213} Dönhoff was an influential woman and in the late 1970s and into the 1980s her attitude toward the East was becoming increasingly popular. She published a multitude of works at \textit{Die Zeit} and was very open about her love for her East German home, thus when the attitude toward Prussian memory started shifting, many looked to her as an example of how to appropriately deal with this tricky past.\textsuperscript{214} The works of these historians and journalists had profound influence on the way in which Prussia was viewed, and it influenced many subsequent texts that dealt with the positive aspects of Prussian heritage.

Besides the militaristic heritage that the divided Germans inherited from Prussia, there were other important aspects of Prussia’s culture that were passed down. The Prussian Exhibit of 1981 was not shying away from the negative, but was also trying to shed light on some of this. Prussia as an army-state was given less attention and Prussia as a “\textit{Kulturstaat}” was gaining prominence. Prussia was the home of such important thinkers such as Immanuel Kant, Friedrich Nietzsche, Karl Marx, and Arthur Schopenhauer. As mentioned earlier, among these celebrated figures were the Humboldt Brothers, who lived by the ideals of the enlightenment-open-mindedness, tolerance, education, and freedom of intellect.\textsuperscript{215} At this point, Germans were moving towards celebrating the parts of their past that had positively contributed to their society instead of shying away from their general history. They were eager to celebrate the great cultural traditions that Prussia gave to the world.

\textsuperscript{213} Ibid., 256.
\textsuperscript{214} Ibid., 256.
educational system that the Humboldt brothers created was given special attention. Many attribute the Humboldt brothers with the inception of the modern university system. The Humboldt’s university system placed emphasis on freedom of thought, research, seminars, and laboratories and it deemphasized religion. The new German university system was widely popular, and by the end of the nineteenth century it had spread around the world. Besides the higher educational system that shaped nations beyond Germany, Prussia was also known for its liberal reform traditions that had coexisted with an authoritarian, militaristic state. It was this liberal reformist tradition that had the most resonance in the GDR in the late 1980s. Indeed, East Germany began to emphasize this inherited ideological affinity. In many ways, Prussia was the precursor to the socialist state. It had been a particularly tolerant place when compared with other European states that existed in the same era. It was tolerant to Jews, allowed modified religious freedom and was the first to develop a welfare state. Otto von Bismarck, who is attributed with being the main figure of German unification, although he generally denied state socialism, was the champion of many of the welfare legislation that was the precursor to socialist policies in the twentieth century. These laws included the Health Insurance Law of 1883, the Accident Insurance Law of 1884, and the Old Age and Disability Insurance Law of 1889. The East German state could look back on this progressive legislation, which had been unique in its time and claim it as a precedent to their socialist state. Thus, they were grounding themselves in German and Prussian history and tradition,

218 Ibid., 503.
within past and the path they had chosen. They were co-opting Prussian memory when it suited them, and neglecting it when it did not. This back and forth, picking and choosing, would prove symptomatic of how Germans dealt with the past in general. The East Germans were creating a narrative of their history by choosing to commemorate and rehabilitate parts of their past that could benefit them and their mission all the while shunning the parts that were not beneficial to their current situation. They were not celebrating the nastier parts of their history, but then again they were not claiming them as their own.

The GDR was not openly celebrating the Prussian past, but there was a subtle effort by the regime to lighten the perception of Prussian. In 1986 the East German government released a set of postage stamps that depicted four Prussian officers in their traditional uniforms. This would have been unthinkable in the immediate post war years when Germans were still grappling with the implications of Prussia and the militaristic heritage that many attributed to the forming of the Nazi State. But now, in 1986, East Germans were not only celebrating Prussia but celebrating an inherently militaristic aspect of Prussia—Prussian officers. Besides these stamps, there was also a celebration of specific officers, two of which were Carl von Clausewitz and August Neihardt von

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These men, who had been accomplished and decorated officers and reformers of the Prussian Army, were being celebrated not as part of the precursory state of Nazi Germany but rather as figures worth celebrating in their own right. This type of normalization of Prussian history was taking place concurrently in the Federal Republic of Germany. Businesses and people were capitalizing on this normalization and a plethora of Prussian-themed goods were being produced in the mid 1980s. Bumper-stickers saying “Ich bin Preuße” (“I’m a Prussian”) were stuck on cars, t-shirts toting similar slogans could be seen on the streets or one could buy the Prussian Flag in tourist shops. The Prussian memory was becoming a tourist attraction in Berlin and would continue to grow and take on a life of its own in the post-reunification years.

It was not only the Prussian past that was being rehabilitated by East Germany during this time, but also the past in general. They embarked on a long, expensive project to renovate the Nikolaiviertel, which was one of the oldest parts of Berlin. This area was given its name because it was centered on the Nikolaikirche, the oldest place of worship in Berlin, which was built around 1230. This neighborhood was on the eastern shore of the Spree on the edge of the historic towns of Berlin and Cölln. In the mid 1970s, the East German government decided to build the historical center anew: they built “a fabricated historical town where the city center once had been,” in order to convey a generic image of the past. This complex was supposed to depict

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221 Boym, Future of Nostaliga, 111.
222 Urban, Neo—Historical Berlin, 120.
the Nikolaiviertel as it had been in history, but its main function was that of entertainment and consumption.\textsuperscript{223} The finished project was not a celebration of this historic center as it had been at its conception in the thirteenth century, or how it had appeared in the gothic era, or the baroque era, or any one particular time period but rather it was conglomeration of “the past,” and was a “profoundly a-historical” site.\textsuperscript{224} Architectural styles that are separated by centuries of history are juxtaposed on this site, attached via the East German \textit{Plattenbau} construction of prefabricated concrete.\textsuperscript{225} The site, while aesthetically non-modern, is not historically-minded. The East Germans were attempting to create a tourist trap of history and memory here, where it looks as if they are celebrating their history while they are really manipulating it to their advantage. The image of the Nikolaiviertel does not project a cohesive understanding of the past but instead it projects a manipulated history attached to a modern agenda. The timing of this rehabilitation of Prussia’s and Berlin’s past was convenient as well. Berlin as about to celebrate its 750\textsuperscript{th} anniversary in 1987, and much of the revision of the past was done to prepare for the celebrations ahead. The Prussian Exhibit in the West, the return of Frederick the Great and the Renovations of the Nikolaiviertel in the East, all lead up to this grand celebration.

Perhaps the greatest demonstration of the acceptance of Prussian history, memory, and heritage was the movement of the capital back to Berlin after reunification. During the division years, East Berlin had been the capital of the GDR but West Berlin was not the capital of the FRG. It would have been impractical and

\textsuperscript{223} Ibid., 120.
\textsuperscript{224} Ibid., 131.
\textsuperscript{225} Ibid., 18.
dangerous for the capital of West Germany to remain in West Berlin, a territory completely surrounded by the unfriendly GDR. The capital was moved to Bonn, a small university town that doubled as a suburb of Cologne, 375 miles west of Berlin. However, upon reunification, the capital (in name) was immediately moved back to Berlin. While it would take nearly nine years for this move to be completed, this decision was indicative of a desire for the past. Berlin has historically been the capital of Germany— it was the capital of the Kingdom in Prussia, of Unified Germany in 1871, of the Weimar Republic, and of Nazi Germany. Moving the capital back to Berlin was an acknowledgment of these pasts. Berlin has always been located in Prussia; many claim it was the center of the German Enlightenment and economic center of Germany in the industrial nineteenth century. This movement indicated that Germans in the post-reunification era were ready to situate themselves in a historically charged city and re-establish their Prussian heritage in city inseparable from Prussian history.

As mentioned, by the 1990s Prussia was not loathed and shunned as it had been decades earlier. In the last decade it had been reintroduced to the national culture both in the East and West. Thus, when Wilhelm von Boddien began his crusade to reconstruct the Stadtschloß it was not seen as inherently nationalistic or dangerously chauvinistic but rather another step in the gradual rehabilitation of Prussian memory. Yet there was something else at play in the years following reunification. Prussia was a shared memory, both East and West Germans could lay claim to that history; it was a collective experience.

227 Ibid., 777.
As Germany was dealing with the challenges of reunification and as Berliners were tearing down the nearly thirty-year-old wall, they sought to find experiences on which they could build their future. It was noted that an “upswing of Prussian pride [in the 1980s] may have something to do with eastern and western desires to be joined together again— through history if not reality.”\textsuperscript{228} After over four decades apart there was little that East and West Berliners had in common, and so they reached back a century to the Prussian past. Svetlana Boym argues that reunification (or as she calls it, unification) was the first time that Germany had to deal with its past in a real context since World War Two.\textsuperscript{229} The Schloß took on this role following reunification. To many Berliners, the Schloß was the last memory of Berlin before it was traumatically divided. The Schloß was not only a shared memory but also its history, if manipulated the right way, could be a positive one. The Schloß or the other incarnations of the building on this site, were important fixtures of Berlin’s history for centuries; the inception of the Schloß marked the beginning of Berlin as a city and as many have claimed, “it isn’t the Schloß that is located in Berlin but rather Berlin is


\textsuperscript{229} Boym, The Future of Nostalgia, 185.
located in the Schloß.” Following reunification the idea of the Schloß became so entwined with the identity of Berlin that it seemed natural to want to rebuild it, especially in the current climate of the city.

However, this interweaving of the mythology and the history of the Schloß would prove to be slightly problematic. Germany had gone from shunning and denying Prussian history to gradually re-embracing it and opening up a dialogue of the good and the bad, and now “disneyfying” it so that the disturbing parts were glossed over to reveal a selective and artificial history. There was no open celebration of the nationalism that came with Prussian heritage but there seemed to be a convenient forgetting. Germany, and Berlin especially, needed to find a common ground on which to rebuild and it was easier, more convenient, to remember the positive aspects than to dwell on the negative. As Berlin was rebuilding as a united city again, memory was also beginning to play a new role. Since reunification, memory has become a tourist attraction in Berlin. The Schloß, when reconstructed, would become a sort of Potemkin village of memory: a beautiful façade that is hiding much more challenging issues.

The Schloß was not the first building from the Prussian era to have been reconstructed or renovated; in the years since 1980 there had been a steady stream of reconstructions and renovations of buildings in the East, West, and reunified Berlin.

The East Germans in the late 1980’s fought for Sanssouci (a palace located in the city

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232 Ibid., 349.
of Potsdam, constructed by Frederick Great in the mid eighteenth century) and the surrounding parks to be accepted as a UNESCO World Heritage Site citing that, “The palace and park of Sanssouci, often described as the ‘Prussian Versailles,’ are a synthesis of the artistic movements of the 18th century in the cities and courts of Europe. That ensemble is a unique example of the architectural creations and landscape design against the backdrop of the intellectual background of monarchical ideas of the state.”

Upon reunification, even more money was pored into the rehabilitation of Prussian past when it was decided in 1995 to demolish the East German Ministry of Foreign Affairs to make way for a reconstruction of Schinkel’s Bauakademie.

It was mentioned before that the 1981 Prussian Exhibition came at a time when Germans on either side of the wall were feeling nostalgic for a common past. The reappraisal of Prussian monument and history in the post reunification years can also be viewed as such. In 1981 the Cold War was ongoing, although it was in a significant lull, and there was a great deal of uncertainty about the future. In the post 1989 world the Cold War had ended but the uncertainty remained. Years after reunification East and West Germans still felt divided. They had different memories, traditions, and cultures, yet by looking back to a shared past they were offered some unity.

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234 This issue, while seemingly set in 1995 has yet to be resolved. Proposals for this reconstruction are still being considered.
235 Boym, Future of Nostalgia, 111.
All of these reconstructions and renovations, all of the attention being given to the past and the Prussian identity and legacy, was a way for the Germans, and specifically the Berliners to create a fantastical past enshrouded with bright colors and happy associations. The past they constructed for themselves through this process was a fantasy—it was what they hoped for instead of what they had. The reconstruction of the Berliner Stadtschloß embodies this concept. What the building had been was a monarchical residence at the center of Berlin that was most known for the constant transformations it underwent with the advent of each new ruler. Its final form, Schlüter’s baroque Schloß was celebrated for its architecture and beauty but it did not usher in an age of democratization and reform as other buildings did, such as the neighboring Reichstag, but instead was steeped in the traditional, militaristic, conservative, monarchical traditions of the Hohenzollerns. Yet, this building is being reconstructed as if it were an Enlightenment temple, an embodiment of ideals that came to fruition in Prussia. As has been seen countless times before, in Berlin, the Germans are constructing a fantasy out their past. They are not necessarily falsifying their past, but rather they are reconstructing it in a way that obscures what they would prefer be forgotten.
Conclusion : The Cycle Continues

The events that transformed this swampy plot of land on the edges of the medieval towns of Berlin and Cölln from a Hohenzollern fortress to reconstructed baroque castle are not only peculiar and unique but also symptomatic of the way in which Berlin handles its own history. The buildings that have graced this site have influenced the city aesthetically and symbolically and are, in a way, a record kept in stone of the various regimes of Berlin and Germany. Each regime attempted to make its mark on the city by utilizing this charged site and manipulating it to best suit their needs. The result is a timeline of the city visible through the history of this site.

However, the history of this site is man made. Each incarnation of this site was built with the intention of projecting a certain image, or painting those in power in favorable light. The original building, Schloß Zwingburg was built with the intention of demonstrating the power of the Hohenzollern electors and, by placing a castle directly in the city, indicated their new hands-on approach to rule. \(^{236}\) When the Schloß was transformed into a Renaissance palace in the seventeenth century it was done so in the style of the Dutch in the hopes to emulate their wealth in a time when Prussia was economically weak. With the eighteenth century renovations to the Schloß and the baroque style imposed upon it by Andreas Schlüter and Johann Friedrich Eosander von Göthe, the Schloß became the “Versailles of Berlin,” and became a symbol of absolutism and emulation of the powerful French monarchs. The demolition of the Stadtschloß in 1950 was a strong political act by the East Germans:

\(^{236}\) Holland, Schnurbus and Walter, *Das Berliner Schloß*, 6.
a claim of communist victory over the past.\textsuperscript{237} Conversely, the demolition of the Palast der Republik in 2008 was seen as a retributive act and a statement of victory over the communists.\textsuperscript{238} With each stage of history this site was transformed and with each transformation came a motive. Therefore, while the history of this site developed concurrently and dependently with the city of Berlin, it cannot be read as an accurate history of the city. Instead, it has been a site of political aspiration on which various governments have attempted to mold the city and its history to suit their purposes over time.

Nevertheless, the history of the Schloß and the history of Berlin are hopelessly intertwined. In the new Stadtschloß there will be a permanent exhibition of the history of Berlin. It is the only exhibition that is required to remain in the space, as stipulated by the Humboldt Forum and the City of Berlin.\textsuperscript{239} This is problematic because it places the history of the city within the new space, within a space and on a site that has such a troubled past and such a peculiar relationship with the city of Berlin. This exhibition is required to remain here— the history of Berlin is required to remain trapped in this space, furthering their dependence on one another and further conflating city and Schloss.

While one cannot look at the history of this site as a history of the city without raising some serious questions about the validity of this claim, the site can be seen as a different type of historical record. This site shows how far back the tradition of historical manipulation extends in Berlin, and to what lengths this tradition is willing

\textsuperscript{237} Boym, \textit{The Future of Nostaliga}, 111.
\textsuperscript{238} Martin, “The Berliner Schloss,” 2012.
to go. One can learn a great deal about the history of Berlin through studying this site. One can see how preoccupied Berliners have been with their image, how the façade is often more important than what it covers, than the substance, and that the image that is desired is given more attention than the image that is actually possessed. This same principles applies to how Berliners deal with their past. Instead of focusing time and energy on they history they have, oftentimes much more attention has been paid to the past that they hope for. The reconstruction of the Stadtschloß is a tangible example of this. It is beautiful, ornate, and culturally vibrant and will become an international space and a celebration of art and education: all the positive aspects that Germans and Berliners claim from their Prussian past. It negates, or at least diminishes the history of division in favor of a history that is shared by all Berliners, East or West. It is understandable that in a city and country whose past is so is so marred by violence and division there would be some elision of the past, but the elision and evasion of the past that is embodied in the reconstruction of the Stadtschloß is not just evading the turmoil filled recent pasts. It is continuing on a familiar path of selective forgetting and historical distortion: a path that is familiar to the city of Berlin and a path with a long tradition on this very site.

In the last few years the debate over this site has simmered down; the future of Berliner Stadtschloß has an aura of finality about it and while there are still concerns about the representation of Berlin’s history through this new site, there is little doubt in anyone’s mind that this building will stand again in the near future. The Stadtschloß is being constructed as I write and the completion date is set in the not so
distant future of 2019. Nearly thirty years after reunification, Berlin will once again, as so many claim, have its “heart” or its “key.”

Throughout the time I have spent on this project, I have been able to watch the slow moving construction process via the Förderverein Berliner Schloß’s website where they have installed a live action webcam. Watching this webcam in any given moment is tedious, as one can barely notice any changes made to the site from day to day. But looking back over the course of this year, foundations have been laid; the concrete basis for the walls of the building has been erected and the massive size of the Stadtschloß has become more and more apparent. I have been a witness to the construction of this building and therefore I have seen the physical representation of the construction of a new, somewhat fantastical, historical identity for Berlin. This building will come to represent the past that Berlin hopes for. A culturally vibrant past will be depicted in the nuances of the building. The beautifully detailed baroque facades juxtaposed with the modernistic belvedere show the willingness of Berliners

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241 Förderverein Berliner Schloß e.V. “Aktuelle Webcam,” http://cam03.berlinerschloss—webcam.de/.
to meld past and present together- in hopes to neutralize the tensions of the site. But
there is no such thing as a neutral history in Berlin. Each past is contested by some
and applauded by others. After studying Berlin for this extended period of time and
getting to know the peculiarities of its perception of its past, I do not see the
Stadtschloß in its final incarnation that will exist on this site. How could I? For the
past six hundred years this plot of land has housed numerous different buildings that
underwent a constant stream of renovations and additions, of demolitions and
constructions that never ceased. There is nothing permanent about this building in
Berlin. History lacks permanence here.

It is easy to assume that after the years of intense debate and the architectural
competitions and the delays of construction and the struggle to find funds, that the
decision that was reached in 2002, the selection of Franco Stella’s design in 2008, and
the future completion of the building in 2019 are all final. The dust has settled and
this is what will be left behind: a reconstructed version of Schlüter’s baroque
Stadtschloß with one modern façade and an internationally oriented interior. Perhaps
there will be some minor alterations to the overall aesthetic of the buildings, some
additions or future renovations, but the integrity of the building will remain the same,
the Stadtschloß is here to stay.

Already there is talk of the future additions that will be made to this building
when it is complete and when the funds are found. As discussed in Chapter Three, the
Förderverein Berliner Schloß will not see this building complete until the cupola that
originally stood over the western entrance is reconstructed in all its former glory;\(^{242}\) and they will not rest until they have collected enough money to do so.\(^{243}\) The interior of the building, which was originally not to be reconstructed in the baroque style, is now being revisited. There is talk of adding in the traditional staircases, or reconstructing especially symbolic rooms in the appropriately historical style.\(^{244}\) Anything is possible, and anything can be changed.

A traveler who visited Berlin nearly a century ago noted in his diary that he had never seen a city reinvent itself as frequently as Berlin.\(^{245}\) This concept is still alive today. In the wake of reunification, Berlin’s skyline was once again transformed into something completely new. The construction that Berlin saw in these years was unprecedented and is still going on today. Berlin had to reinvent itself after years spent in division as a new city, a city with a strong and united future. This time of “critical reconstruction” is coming to an end as Berlin’s skyline begins to take shape and the Stadtschloß will most likely be one of the last major public buildings constructed in this era.\(^{246}\) But no one knows how long the Stadtschloß will remain in the form that will be completed in 2019. It has never stayed in one incarnation for long, so perhaps it will see many more transformations that are yet to come.


\(^{243}\) Manfred Rettig, *Das Berliner Schloss wird zum Humboldt Forum*, 10.

\(^{244}\) Ibid., 12.


Throughout the process of studying the tumultuous history of this building I came across a simple slogan that a few pro-Palast supporters coined and that would often appear on signs used at pre-demolition protests. It read: “Schloß 2000, Palast 2037?” and it stuck with me as I began to think about the larger historical trends in Berlin.\textsuperscript{247} It stuck with me because it simply yet effectively pointed to the biggest unleashed by demolishing the Palast and reconstructing the Schloß. Nothing in Berlin is permanent, therefore if the Palast were to be demolished and the Schloß were to be reconstructed, how long would it take before there was another demand for the alteration of this site? In thirty years would there be an outcry for the demolition of the Schloß and the reconstruction of the Palast? It seems far-fetched, especially after all that went into reconstructing the Stadtschloß, but if one looks at the history of Berlin and the history of this site, it does not seem so impossible.

Berlin is a city of change, reinvention, and of manipulation of history. Today, the Stadtschloß is the closest representation of the history that Berlin longs for, but no one can know what history Berlin will desire tomorrow. When the tide turns and Berlin longs for a different history, as has happened time and again in the past, they may once again alter history for their own benefit and one tried and true method of this is altering the architectural integrity of the city, and of specifically this site, to more adequately represent their new desired past and thus their desired future.

It took Berliners over half a century to come to terms with their Prussian legacy, and decades for them to come to terms with their Nazi past. But slowly there was an acceptance and a reexamination of their history. It is often the most immediate

\textsuperscript{247} Colomb, “Requiem for a lost Palast,” 287.
pasts that Berliners have had the most trouble dealing with. Perhaps the debate concerning the Palast and the Stadtschloß stem from this same issue. The Cold War and the years of division are troublesome to Berliners and it is easier for them to revert back to a collective past rather than immediately coming to terms with their divisive one. The desire to reconstruct the Stadtschloß may be indicative of a desire for stability and a desire for the establishment of a collective history on which Berliners can build a new identity. But in the years to come, as the distance between the present and reunification grows, will there be a reappraisal of the division years? Will a new generation of Berliners who did not personally experience the trauma of division begin to ask questions and reevaluate this past just as the generation once removed from the Nazi and the Prussian past did? It may be decades in the future, it may be a century from now, but this history is surely not done being rediscovered, reappropriated, and reevaluated.
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