Architecture through Techno: Post-Reunification Identity in Berlin

University of Manitoba

Faculty of Architecture
Creative Works Category

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Alexandra Margulets. *Techno Collage.* 2021. Winnipeg, Manitoba. Canada.

Introduction

My research project aims to examine the unique phenomenon Berlin has experienced in the past three decades in the form of Techno-culture. A movement that helped shape Berlin's new identity.

In a single century, Berlin experienced World War I, Weimar, National Socialism, World War II, post-war occupation, cold war division, reunification and globalization. Berlin's extraordinary and complicated past resulted in a search for a new identity that would encompass both East and West mentalities of a divided city while dealing with the memories of the past.

One such identity would begin to form out of a 90s subculture music movement. Coupled with distinct circumstances that led to the city's reunification, Berlin's techno identity began to take shape and, over the years, secure its image as the Techno capital of the world.

Method + Process

The ongoing Covid 19 Pandemic has restricted the opening of clubs and travel to Berlin. Thus, articles, poster analysis, film screenings, and an interview with techno artist were used as primary research mediums.

Various article readings presented an insight into the post-reunification landscape of abandoned, ruined, and underused industrial sites that offered a space for techno music, dancing, and drug culture. Moreover, several readings accounted for the evolution of techno music, from 1980s Detroit to its current capital in Berlin.

Further analysis of Berlin's poster-culture proved essential in understanding the movement's mentality, specifically through Vanja Golubovic's Tresor club posters and Frontpage Magazine Techno covers.

I found distinct geometry, space, and fluidity elements, suggesting a strong relationship between architecture and techno in Berlin's poster and techno-culture.

My research was further enhanced by interviewing Konstantin Gervis, a techno artist residing in Berlin. Gervis provided insight into why techno succeeded in Berlin, describing German mentality and ruin aesthetics as primary conditions for the development of techno.

Film screenings further helped visualize the urbanscapes and learn of the cultural shifts Berlin has experienced through the decades. For example, *Murderers Among Us* (1946) by Wolfgang Staudte and *The Big Lift* (1950) by George Seaton showcase the loss of identity and reconciliations of memories after the post-war period. In comparison, *Architect* (1990) by Peter Kahan and *Wings of Desire* (1987) by Wim Wenders follow the two distinct mentalities formed in Berlin's East and West sectors. Finally, *Run Lola Run* by Tom Tykwer gives a glimpse of a new, youthful and exciting identity shaped by techno.

Conclusion

My research over the summer helped underline the fundamental ideologies and opportunities which contributed to the development of Techno identity in Berlin.

With the onset of reunification, the youth of Berlin met with unique circumstances. The West brought forth a new electronic sound, while the East rediscovered abandoned and ruin architecture left from the War.

Together the two sides found common ground through techno, combining space with music and becoming an important fragment in the city's fabric and establishing Berlin's identity as the capital of techno.

Alexandra Margulets. *Films of Berlin Collage.* 2021. Winnipeg, Manitoba. Canada.

Ralph Stern. *Ruins.* Photograph. Berlin, Germany.

Vanja, Golubovic. *Tresor Poster Series.* Graphical. 2015.

Konstantin Gervis. *Ruins of Marzahn.* Track Cover. Berlin, Germany.

Collage Citations:

Techno Collage citations
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The Murderers Among Us still. 1946. Greg Neville's photography blog
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