

Two Variations on the History of Alexanderplatz:

Scenario 1:

Having won the 1928 competition, the Luckhardt Brothers with Alfons Anker were commissioned to realize their design. Through generous investment by American backers, the building is finished in 1932. Because of its unified, modern and dynamic form, Alexanderplatz achieves worldwide fame. During the war, heavy bombing destroys the east and north sides of the square. After 1945, a reconstruction of the square is considered, though the infrastructure had revealed itself as being too small already in the 30s. Consequently, only the two southern buildings are restored. In 1953 Ulbricht demands the adoption of the "National Traditions" style. Henselmann, though only a few weeks earlier an ardent Modernist, responds as head of a working collective with a proposal for Stalin-Allee and Alexanderplatz. There is an urgent need for representational government buildings, so work on Alexanderplatz is started immediately and finished within two years. The central committee of the SED move into the middle building at the north end of the square which is now set aside for parades and rallies. Upheavals in the USSR and the consequent setbacks prevent Stalin-Allee being built in a similar style; therefore the planners resort to a cheaper Plattenbau (prefabricated units) method. After the reunification, Alexanderplatz is accused of being Stalinist and eclectic, however with the emerging interest in historicising town planning, the square is listed.

Scenario 2:

In 1928 American investors support a proposal by Mies van der Rohe. By 1932, five of the planned eleven buildings are finished. During the war, large parts of the square are destroyed by air raids. After 1945, the East German Senate decides to restore two relatively undamaged Mies van der Rohe buildings. In the 60s these are integrated into the restructuring of the square. After the reunification, Daniel Libeskind wins first prize just ahead of Kollhoff. Between 1995 and 1999, the first building is realized - the Euroforum - which resembles Mies van der Rohe's famous 1921 proposal for Friedrich Strasse. The buildings function to provide offices for European organisations next to the town hall meets with some resistance from the public. Up to the present, only the Berliner Touristik GmbH have moved in. Further realization of the plan is uncertain, as the need for office space has slackened and there is increasing demand for pre WW1 style (Gründerzeit) architecture.

Albrecht Schäfer März 2001