

DAS MINSK

KUNSTHAUS IN POTSDAM

HISTORY

COLLECTION AND FOUNDATION

ARCHITECTURE

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HISTORY OF THE BUILDING

The former terrace restaurant "Minsk" was built from 1971 to 1977 on Potsdam's Brauhausberg in the modernist style of the GDR according to a design by the architects Karl-Heinz Birkholz and Wolfgang Müller.

As early as 1962, the development of the Brauhausberg area was planned with a swimming hall and a restaurant, connected through a terrace complex with fountains. That the so-called Brauhausberg Ensemble would only be finished many years later is, on one hand, due to the fact that the rubble was not cleared from the area until 1967, and on the other hand due to financial shortages in the city of Potsdam's economic plan and difficulties procuring materials. The architect Karl-Heinz Birkholz reported in an interview¹ that the steel intended for the construction was used for the completion of the Palast der Republik in Berlin, among other projects. The swimming hall opened in 1971. However, it was to take another six years before construction was finished on the restaurant. In 1977, the terrace restaurant "Minsk" was finally completed with the participation of Minsk artists and architects as a Belarusian folklore restaurant. Conversely, the city of Minsk had already opened the restaurant "Potsdam" in 1971. The naming partnership is based on the exchange between the two cities that began in 1968.²

During GDR, the "Minsk" was a popular place of recreation and excursion destination. The restaurant was a place where guests came together, talked, celebrated, and danced. After the fall of the Berlin Wall and the restaurant's closure in the mid-90s, the building was increasingly neglected, and the ruin ultimately seemed doomed for demolition. It was the citizens of Potsdam who actively helped to prevent the demolition plans. In 2019, the Hasso Plattner Foundation purchased the building to refurbish it and make it accessible to the public once more. The old "Minsk" thus became DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam.

Inside the building, reminiscences of the old "Minsk" can be found, such as the large spiral staircase and the rounded bar counter, but with a new look: the interior design of the foyer and bar was realized by the architectural office Linearama from Genoa in collaboration with the Hedwig Bollhagen Werkstätten in Markwitz, Brandenburg.

¹ See Jörg Fröhlich and Luise Fröhlich, *Das Potsdamer Terrassenrestaurant "Minsk" und der Brauhausberg im Wandel der Zeit (1970–2015)* (Norderstedt 2015), p. 59.

² See Thomas Wernicke, "Minsk – Potsdam. Zwei Städte, zwei Restaurants und die 'deutsch-sowjetische Freundschaft'", in: *Mitteilungen des Vereins für Kultur und Geschichte Potsdams*, 23, ed. by the Vorstand der Studiengemeinschaft Sanssouci e. V. (Potsdam 2018) pp. 7–32, here pp. 9–28.

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Art from the Hasso Plattner Collection at DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam

The former terrace restaurant "Minsk", built in the 1970s in the modernist style of the GDR, has become a place of encounter between modern and contemporary art—and between people. Artworks from the former GDR, which are part of the Hasso Plattner Collection, will be shown here in new contexts.

"For many Potsdamers, the building is associated with happy memories. The architecture from the time of the GDR is part of the city's history and I want to give the place back to the people of Potsdam."

—Hasso Plattner

One focus of the Hasso Plattner Collection is art from the former GDR, and DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam maintains the works from the collection that were created after 1945. Developed over the course of years, the extensive collection of significant works by renowned artists from the former GDR, such as Wolfgang Matheuer, Bernhard Heisig, and Ruth Wolf-Rehfeldt, forms the starting point for the museum's program. Works from this time will be brought into dialogue with contemporary art at DAS MINSK.

"In the new exhibition space, works from after 1945 in the collection will find a home. Art from the former GDR is still scarcely represented in museums today and does not receive the appreciation it deserves. We want to change that by making the works available to the public and showing how diverse and significant the art of this time is."

—Hasso Plattner

Commitment to Art, Science, and Nature Conservation

As cofounder and long-time chairman of the software company SAP, Hasso Plattner is one of Germany's most distinguished entrepreneurs. The city of Potsdam now has him to thank for founding two museums and the Hasso Plattner Institute. He was honored with honorary citizenship of Potsdam in 2017 for his great commitment to the city as his second home.

The long-term philanthropic activities of the Plattner family have been consolidated into the Hasso Plattner Foundation since 2015. The internationally active Potsdam-based foundation has set itself the goal, among other things, of accelerating the establishment of digital technologies in science and education, improving access to art and culture, and combining environment and social commitment.

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As sponsor and shareholder of both cultural venues DAS MINSK Kunsthaus in Potsdam and Museum Barberini, the Hasso Plattner Foundation finances museum operations, the exhibition program, and the expansion of the collection.

"The former terrace restaurant MINSK is connected with memories for many Potsdamers. Many of them fought for the preservation of the old Minsk precisely for this reason, because to a certain extent it was also about the preservation of their own identity and that of the city. DAS MINSK wants to pick up exactly where it left off and once again establish itself as a place of encounter that extends beyond art. Here we show, search, discuss, endure, and bring together, and hopefully also dance and laugh together again. I hope for being together and for each other."

— Stefanie Plattner

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QUOTES ON THE ARCHITECTURE

Karl-Heinz Birkholz

Architect Terrassenrestaurant "Minsk"

"Good architecture can already be discerned in a sketch through convincing relationships between the planned structure and the selected location. Potsdam's urban landscape is rich in fine examples of this tendency through the activities of many architects and master builders—and their primarily royal patrons. In the case of Minsk, the architectural quality achieved was rediscovered belatedly and often only by looking at it from the outside.

Originally planned over 50 years ago as a part of an urban ensemble at the foot of the Brauhausberg, it enjoyed great popularity as the terrace restaurant Minsk with an unobstructed view of the city center. Thankfully, Potsdam's citizens and civic associations took a strong stand against the threatened demolition and plans for a massive densification of buildings.

The tides literally turned at the last minute for everyone involved. Hasso Plattner's private vision, combined with a realigned urban policy, enabled the surprising gift of reclaiming part of Brauhausberg. His appreciation of Minsk's compelling charisma as a solitary structure on a green slope returns the familiar view, along with its fountains, to the urban community—now in a new, elegant guise as DAS MINSK Kunsthau in Potsdam."

Dr. Alexander Gyalokay, Heinle Wischer Gesellschaft für Generalplanung mbH

Planning and execution renovation

"On Brauhausberg in Potsdam, the revitalization of the former terrace restaurant "Minsk" as a museum creates not only an outstanding new venue for art, but rather overhauls the suburb of the southern station and offers a new space for its residents. The path up to the museum is via a promenade accompanied by four fountains, an apt approximation of the historical model. The building's conversion was carried out in accordance to the early design and overall shows a strong connection to classical modernism."

LINEARAMA and VALTER SCELSI

Interior Design: Foyer and Cafébar

"In developing the interior design for the iconic entrance area and the Cafébar at DAS MINSK Kunsthau in Potsdam, the point of departure was aiming to acknowl-

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edge and honor the history of the space, starting from the present. Through following all the historical traces we could find and interlacing them with the given parameters, we started becoming more acquainted with the 20th-century aesthetics of the space and the work of the iconic GDR ceramist Hedwig Bollhagen, who was introduced to us by DAS MINSK. By working with her handmade tiles, reproduced for the occasion by her own factory in Brandenburg, we saw and felt the memories of the place resurface, respectfully accentuated and recomposing the images of a past that is still close at hand."