

Brutalist Practice in 1960's Berlin Churches: Experimental Interior Spaces

ARTICLE

Post-War Berlin Architecture, Brutalism, Reyner Banham, Church Architecture, Raw Concrete

/Abstract

Numerous buildings, especially religious buildings, were destroyed and damaged in Europe during the Second World War. The city of Berlin is among those that suffered losses.

Repairing the damage to churches that have a place in the collective memory and designing new churches played a crucial role in helping people hold on to life again. In the 1960s, new church construction in West Berlin experienced its pick. In this period, which Goldhagen describes as an interregnum between an expiring Modernism and dawning Postmodernism, experimental designs emerged under the influence of Brutalism. This study focuses on brutalist churches built in Berlin in the 1960s: Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, Maria Regina Martyrum Memorial Church, and Paul Gerhardt Church. Defining a point of identity for the city, these churches not only represent a point of social unification for the community but also aim to strengthen the faith. It is possible to capture the same spiritual effect in the blue light leaking from the concrete modules in Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, the light shining through the concrete beams in Maria Regina Martyrum Memorial Church, and the colors reflected from the stained glass in Paul Gerhardt Church. The role of religious buildings in the post-war Berlin brutalist practice, design parameters in the context of Reyner Banham's principles, and the spiritual effect of light were discussed through literature, periodicals, and visuals obtained through on-site documentation.

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Introduction:

1960s Berlin Churches in the Synthesis of Architecture-Concrete- Faith

Numerous buildings were destroyed and damaged in Europe during the Second World War. Church buildings had an essential place in collective memory. The importance attributed to churches by the communities increased with the destruction after the war. People sought peace in religious buildings, which the times did not offer. The post-war period was a time of reflection, self-examination, and a new orientation in the Christian churches.¹ Berlin was one of the cities that suffered much destruction, and many places of worship were damaged. After the war, reconstruction began rapidly, and massive housing projects in the Late Modernist style were built along the city's periphery in record time. As a result of the war, religious buildings became the most prominent social meeting points where people reestablished themselves, so notable brutalist-style churches were also built in residential areas. These churches provided a representation – with their sculptural, raw concrete forms – to compensate for the surrounding architectural monotony.² The study focuses on the brutalist churches built in West Berlin in the 1960s in the synthesis of architecture-concrete-faith. The study includes a comprehensive architectural analysis of three churches of the period that have a prominent role in the urban memory: Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, Maria Regina Martyrum Memorial Church, and Paul Gerhardt Church, based on Reyner Banham's brutalist principles [Fig. 1].

1 Patrick Voigt and Nikolaus Bernau, *Beton und Glaube-Kirchen der Nachkriegsmoderne in Berlin* (Berlin: Archipendiumedition, 2004), 5.

2 Felix Torkar, *Brutalist Berlin Map* (London: Blue Crow Media, 2021).

Fig. 1
Location of the brutalist churches in Berlin described in the essay (Map data ©2024 Google edited by the authors).

The redevelopment also included reconstructing and expanding West Berlin's Catholic and Protestant worship infrastructure. In this context, the initial reconstruction efforts focused on the historical city centers and central churches, which had sustained heavy damage. According to Pehnt, in Germany, between 1960 and 1970, the expectation of architecture was formulated to reflect the demands of society at large, promoting processes but also heeding form.³ This approach, which prioritized the wishes of the public and social welfare, also influenced the design processes of religious buildings. For instance, in the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church project, the preservation of the remains of the old church was brought to the agenda with the demands of the public. Also, Paul Gerhardt Church had a design approach that preserves and incorporates the remains of old churches damaged in the war into new buildings. Maria Regina Martyrum Memorial Church is a newly constructed religious building that serves as a memorial church. The case studies in this context also address two approaches to the new post-war church-building practice. The study examines Berlin's post-war religious architectural practice and how brutalist principles were applied in churches. The significance of religious buildings in the post-war Berlin brutalist practice, image conception in the context of Banham's principles, brutalist design parameters reflected in the interior space, and the spiritual effect of the use of light were discussed through the relevant literature, periodicals, visuals, and impressions obtained through on-site documentation.

In post-war Germany, the main questions were how to organize the reconstruction and which forms were appropriate.⁴ The church building typologies used since late antiquity, particularly basilicas or gallery churches, were no longer used after the war. The inherent social hierarchization of the congregation did not fit in with a democratizing society at the time.⁵ This situation brought about a search for total space and a central plan approach in religious building typology.

The most significant innovation in the design of religious buildings from the mid-1950s is that they began to express themselves in ever stronger forms. These forms enabled the creation of a memorable image in the urban memory, one of the principles of Brutalism. The search for an appropriate form and material for the church, which is changing in its social and spatial dimension, is shaped by the use of concrete as a new building material and represents the transformation of society towards a new, more democratic order. The forms, which emerged freely from the possibilities offered by reinforced concrete and thus increased the design canon to an unprecedented diversity, are interpreted as 'contemporary' in their expression, that is, as pointing to the future. Therefore, they reflect the transformation of churches in both directions: the change in

3 Wolfgang Pehnt, *German Architecture: 1960-1970* (New York & Washington: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 42.

4 Anette S. Busse, *Im Spannungsfeld Brutalistischer Strömungen und Liturgischer Bewegung. Bauten der Nachkriegsmoderne von Klaus Franz* (Karlsruhe: KIT Scientific Publishing, 2020), 311.

5 Voigt and Bernau, "Beton und Glaube", 5.

liturgy in relation to the community and new church spaces and structures.⁶ Other principles of Brutalism, such as clear exhibition of the structure, valuation of the material as found, and the emphasis on “honesty,” reflected the atmosphere of the period. The purity of form, material, and structure strengthened the spiritual aura of the churches.

Jürgen Joedicke wrote in his article *Church building in our time* dated 1958 that more Protestant and Catholic churches were built in Germany in the first years after the war than in the centuries since the Reformation.⁷ West Germany’s most remarkable new churches were modern. The modernist designs of the Catholic and Protestant churches of this period refer to the Middle Ages, the neo-medieval of the Second Reich, the *pluralizing Modernism* of the twentieth century, and the destruction caused by the Second World War.⁸

Architectural historians describe a few decades in architectural culture following the Second World War as an *interregnum* between an expiring Modernism and a dawning Postmodernism, during which Modernism continued to produce its revisions.⁹ These revisionist discourses, defined by Goldhagen as *pluralizing Modernism*, indicate the multiple nature of Modernism.¹⁰ Reyner Banham, the theorist of Brutalism, one of the revisions of Modernism, put forward the basic principles that distinguish the concept of Brutalism from other contemporary architectural approaches in his academic studies:¹¹

1. Memorability as an Image
2. Clear exhibition of Structure
3. Valuation of Materials as *found*.

The first principle is to create a memorable impression. Banham defines the concept of image in its simplest sense as visually valuable. Image essentially requires that the building be an immediately comprehensible visual entity, and that the form grasped by the eye be confirmed by the experience of using the building.¹² According to the principle of a clear display of the structure, all the constructive elements that complete the building should be used without hiding or covering. The last principle concerns the presentation of materials as they come from the source or the use of raw-looking variations of all selected materials. From a material point of view, the word *brut* means that concrete should not be hidden, wood should not be sanded, plaster should not be smoothed, paint

6 Busse, *Im Spannungsfeld Brutalistischer*, 312-313.

7 Jürgen Joedicke, “Kirchenbau in unserer Zeit: der Standpunkt des Architekten,” *Bauen und Wohnen*, no. 12 (1958): 354.

8 Kathleen James-Chakraborty, *Modernism as Memory: Building Identity in the Federal Republic of Germany*, (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2018.), 40.

9 Sarah Williams Goldhagen, and Rejean Legault, “Critical Themes of Postwar Modernism,” in *Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture*, eds. Sarah Williams Goldhagen & Rejean Legault (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000).

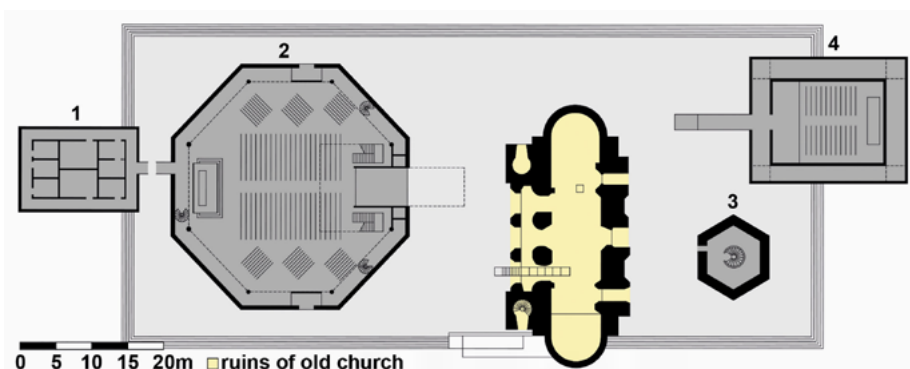
10 Sarah Williams Goldhagen, “Coda: Reconceptualizing The Modern,” in *Anxious Modernisms: Experimentation in Postwar Architectural Culture*, eds. Sarah Williams Goldhagen, and Rejean Legault (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2000).

11 Reyner Banham, “The New Brutalism,” *Architectural Review*, December (1955): 354-361; Reyner Banham, *The New Brutalism: Ethic or Aesthetic* (London: Architectural Press, 1966).

12 Banham, “The New Brutalism”, 354-361.



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should not be applied directly to walls, and the rough surface of brick should be protected.¹³

Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church

The Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, completed in 1961, represents the urban center of West Berlin and serves as a symbolic figure for the city.¹⁴ The complex, designed by Egon Eiermann, comprises four new buildings surrounding the ruins of the central tower of the old church, which was damaged during World War II [Fig. 2]. A stepped plateau is laid around the tower, where the octagonal church, the hexagonal bell tower, the rectangular parish building, known as the foyer, and the equally rectangular chapel are located [Fig. 3].¹⁵

The old church, designed by Franz Schwecht, was constructed between 1891 and 1892. Following the destruction of the church by an air strike in 1943, dis-

Fig. 2
Kaiser Wilhelm Church
Complex (authors archive,
2022).

Fig. 3
Plan of Kaiser Wilhelm Church;
(1) foyer, (2) church, (3) bell
tower, (4) chapel
(visualized and scaled by
authors based on Beton und
Glaube-Kirchen der
Nachkriegsmode in Berlin.
Berlin: Archipendiumedition,
2004.

13 Chis van Uffelen, *Massive, Expressive, Sculptural: Brutalism Now and Then* (Braun Publishing, 2018).

14 Laurids Ortner, "Grossstädtisch werden: Projekte und Bauten in der Stadt von Haus Rucker & Co.," *Bauen+Wohnen*, no. 3 (1987): 28.

15 Voigt, and Bernau, *Beton und Glaube*, 56.



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cussions about its future commenced in the post-war period. The demolishing wastes were removed in 1954-1955, but the West Tower was left in a state of disrepair.¹⁶ An invited competition for the new design was organized in 1956 with the participation of nine architects experienced in church buildings. In 1957, Eiermann's project, which entailed the demolition of the West Tower ruins, was selected for construction.¹⁷ However, the idea of demolishing the West Tower, which has become a part of the urban memory, has provoked reactions from Berliners.¹⁸ These reactions show the extent to which the residents embrace the church and prove the image value it carries. In response to mounting pressure from the public and the press, the board of trustees of the Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church Foundation initiated a process to include the old tower in the proposed development. Consequently, Eiermann developed a conservationist methodology for the design, preserving the existing part and integrating it into the new church. When the construction was completed in 1961, it was a political monument to the West's presence and faith's existence in the divided city.¹⁹ Following the inauguration of the church, Eiermann's reluctant attitude changed completely. While the first design could have been built anywhere in the world, the revised version, integrated into the old church, was unique and specific to its location.²⁰ The new tower rising next to the ruined church does not exceed the old one in size and does not throw it out of focus.

The Kaiser Wilhelm Church provides Banham's principle of *memorability as an image* in an abstract sense, recalling both the chaos and destruction of war and the value of peace. It is an iconic city symbol with its innovative design,

16 Cornelius Holtorf, *Destruction and Reconstruction of Cultural Heritage as Future-Making*. In *The Future of the Bamiyan Buddha Statues: Heritage Reconstruction in Theory and Practice*, ed. Masanori Nagaoka, 161. Unesco Publishing, 2020, <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-51316-0> (last accessed December 2024).

17 Gerhard Kabierske, "Der Architekt Egon Eiermann und die Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-Kirche," *KWG Magazin*, (October 2021): 7

18 "Vom Wiederaufbau der Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtnis-Kirche in Berlin," *Bauen + Wohnen*, no. 12 (1958): 10.

19 Kabierske, "Der Architekt Egon Eiermann", 9-11.

20 Rüdiger Zill, "A true witness of transience: Berlin's Kaiser- Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche and the symbolic use of architectural fragments in modernity," *European Review of History: Revue européenne d'histoire*, Vol. 18, no. 5-6 (2011): 820-821, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13507486.2011.618332> (last accessed December 2024).

Fig. 4
Kaiser Wilhelm Church, towers
of the old and new church
(authors archive, 2022).

Fig. 5
Kaiser Wilhelm Church, facade
(authors archive, 2022).



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prominent position, and, especially, its two towers (a unique combination of old and new) [Fig. 4]. The church's image was also frequently used on postcards, one of the standard mass media of the period. This combination of the new and old represents a nostalgia, perhaps an aesthetic of ruin, perhaps a resurrection from the wreckage of the old.²¹

Following Banham's principle of *the clear exhibition of structure*, the two main elements of the building's construction, the steel structural profiles, and the prefabricated concrete modules are displayed [Fig. 5]. Kaiser Wilhelm Church consists of particularly filigree prefabricated concrete elements.²² The gaps of the concrete modules that form the texture are filled with colored stained glass in some places and with raw concrete in others. Detail of the facade superposed the grid of the gaps between the prefab elements with a concrete grid between the glass slabs [Fig. 6, 7].²³ This detail creates different light and shadow effects on the facade at different times of the day.

The principle of *the valuation of materials* is exemplified in this church through the ingenious and distinctive combination of concrete and glass. The concrete utilized for the facades and interiors is of a raw, unprocessed quality. The church's altar is adorned with stained glass concrete modules, creating an unusual atmosphere. The stained glass slabs, the work of the French artist Gabriel Loire, form translucent walls [Fig. 8]. The blue light that permeates the octagonal church through its walls produces a spiritual effect. The gallery floor with the organ is located above the entrance door and in direct opposition to the altar. Eiermann initially explored the concept of colored light through the grid texture, which he applied as a master in Kaiser Wilhelm, in the St. Matthew Church in Pforzheim, constructed between 1951 and 1953. St. Matthew Church also exhibits a brutalist approach, yet the structural system's use of raw concrete rather than steel differentiates the two cases.

21 Stanislaus von-Moos, "Gedächtniskirche à la carte. Notes on the Political Fortunes of a Pile of Stones," *RA. Revista de Arquitectura*, no. 25 (2023): 10-33, <https://doi.org/10.15581/014.25.10-33>.

22 Helmut Weber, "Kaiser-Wilhelm-Gedächtniskirche Berlin – Qualität und Geschichte einer Instandsetzung," *Bautechnik*, 84 (2006): 268-271, <https://doi.org/10.1002/bate.200710024>.

23 Sabine von Fischer, "Risse, Spalten, Fugen: Spielraum im architektonischen Detail," *Bauen + Wohnen*, no. 93 (2006): 52.

Fig. 6
Kaiser Wilhelm Church, side
entrance of the church (authors
archive, 2022).

Fig. 7
Kaiser Wilhelm Church
prefabricated concrete module
detail (authors archive, 2022).



Maria Regina Martyrum Memorial Church

Designed by architects Hans Schädel and Friedrich Ebert, the church was under construction between 1960 and 1963. The construction techniques in the building of Maria Regina Martyrum Church in Charlottenburg reflected the prevailing state of the technological advancement of the period. The complex comprises two churches, one on the ground floor and the other on the upper floor, a ceremonial hall, a parish hall, a presbytery, a playground, a kindergarten, and a tower [Fig. 9].²⁴ The church was dedicated to martyrs for religious freedom and conscience in the National Socialist era. In light of the aforementioned historical context, the architects of the Church of Maria Regina Martyrum oriented the building in a manner that would face Plötzensee, a former execution site during the National Socialist era. The sizeable ceremonial courtyard, accessed via Heckerdamm Street, refers to the concentration camps, and the bell tower at the end of the courtyard represents a watchtower. The ceremonial courtyard provides a venue for events with 10,000 attendees. A cubic sculptural form characterizes the bell tower [Fig. 10].²⁵ In describing this memorial church, the architect Schädel said, *like an Easter promise in the face of Plötzensee*. This metaphor is manifested within the interior of the church. The rising sun's light should shine into the church through the ribbon windows at the side of the altarpiece, *like an Easter promise – an assurance of life – in the face of Plötzensee – the place of painful death*.

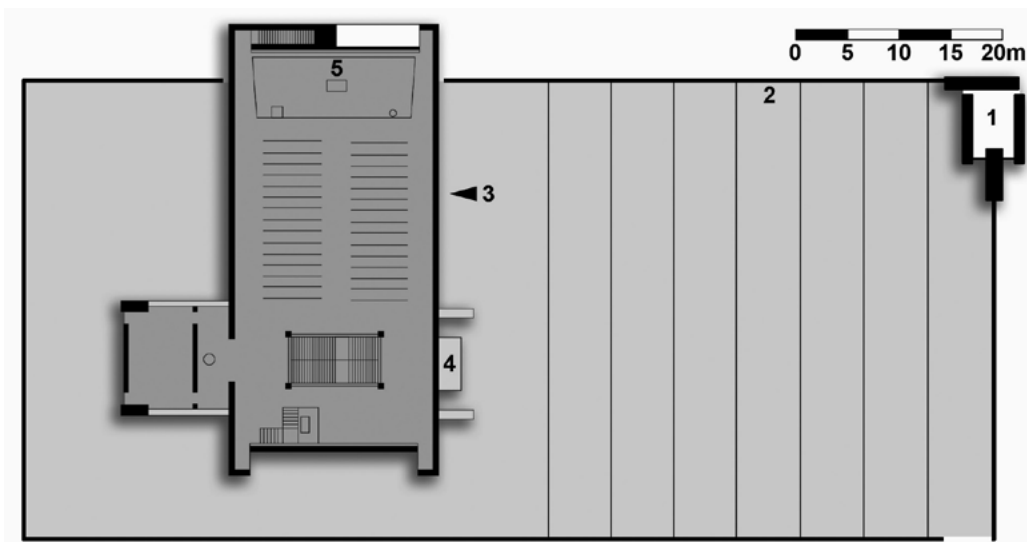
24 H. A., "Aus Berliner Tagebuchnotizen," *Berner Schulblatt – L'Ecole Bernoise*, no. 98, H:32/33 (1965): 568.

25 Voigt and Bernau, *Beton und Glaube*, 69.

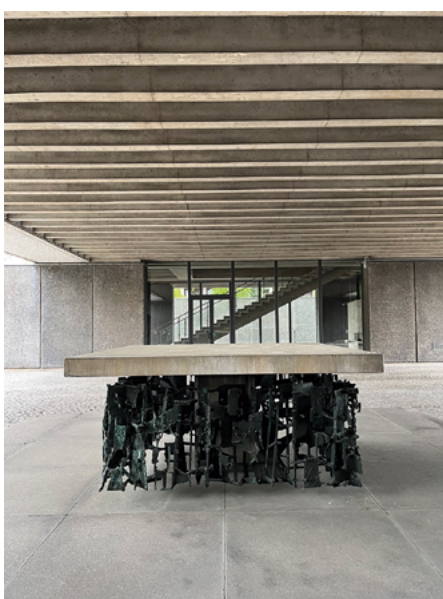
Fig. 8
Altar of Kaiser Wilhelm Church
(authors archive, 2022).



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Fig. 9
Maria Regina Martyrum Church
(authors archive, 2022).

Fig. 10
Plan of Maria Regina Martyrum Church: (1) bell tower, (2) Stations of the Cross by Otto Herbert Hajek, (3) open-air altar, (4) Apocalyptic Woman by Fritz Koenig, (5) altar painting by Georg Meistermann (visualized and scaled by authors based on Beton und Glaube-Kirchen der Nachkriegsmode in Berlin. Berlin: Archipendiumedition, 2004).

Fig. 11
Maria Regina Martyrum Church, open-air altar (authors archive, 2022).

Fig. 12
Maria Regina Martyrum Church staircase (authors archive, 2022).

The church serves as the community center of a suburban parish in addition to religious function and has a significant place in the collective urban memory.²⁶ Furthermore, the building's iconic architectural character also offers a sense of Reyner Banham's *memorability as an image*. From the vantage point of Heckerdamm Street, one can first discern the bell tower included in the courtyard wall. The concrete tower represents a symbolic figure for the environment of the church.

The second principle of Banham, *the clear exhibition of structure*, is evident in both the exterior and interior analyses of the building. The primary mass above the load-bearing walls exhibits a cantilever suspended in the air. The structure of load-bearing walls is visible. The raw concrete beams underneath the massive mass are exposed, defining a semi-open space inside the open-air altar in the courtyard [Fig. 11]. A single-spine raw concrete staircase leads from the ground floor to the first-floor church [Fig. 12]. The upper church's interior functions as a building exhibition because the structure and materials can be observed in their most honest form. The horizontal raw concrete beams that form the ceiling structure are displayed.

Concrete, natural stone, and wooden materials fulfill the principle of *the valuation of materials as found* in this church. Natural materials were used on the facades; the massive mass was covered with white marble pebble slabs. All materials in the church's interior were selected based on their inherent qualities and used in their unprocessed state. The exposed walls were decorated with alternating patterns designed with wooden concrete forms. The ceiling structure comprises unprocessed wood panelings between the beams. The seating units were also made of raw wood. The church organ, another element made of wood, is on a raw concrete console opposite the altar. Furthermore, the route to the gallery floor comprises raw concrete elements derived from the wall.

The church represents a distinctive instance of the convergence of architectural and artistic elements within a religious edifice, exhibiting a degree of innovation ahead of its period. It is home to several notable works of art, including pieces by Fritz König, Otto Herberts Hajek, and a monumental altar painting by Georg Meistermann.²⁷ One of the most significant characteristics that make the church unique is the abstract painting on the altar wall. The entire wall behind the altar is painted with areas of color that are partly calm and then again shimmering, falling, and rising forms. It is an entirely abstract painting; only a



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26 Pehnt, *German Architecture: 1960-1970*, 34.

27 Sabine Klopfeish, *Path of Remembrance. Memorial Area Charlottenburg-Nord* (Wirtschaftsförderung. Berlin:Pinguin Druck, 2021).

Fig. 13
Altar of Maria Regina Martyrum
Church (authors archive, 2022).

tiny lamb with a crown and seven eyes is recognizable [Fig. 13].²⁸ The perfect combination of light and art emphasizes the altar of the church. The vertical lighting positioned behind the panel serves to accentuate the spiritual effect. In front of the long wall of the courtyard facing the tower are large cast-iron statues designed by Otto Herbert Hajek. The sculptures, assembled in seven groups of varying dimensions, depict the *Station of the Cross* [Fig. 14]. Except for the initial figure, situated at a distance from the remaining figures, each group is characterized by a cross figure. Additionally, the figure of Christ is discernible within this composition. The entrance to the church is symbolized by the golden portal sculpture by Fritz Koenig, *the Apocalyptic Woman*, shining in the sunlight [Fig. 15].



Paul Gerhardt Church

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The architects of Paul Gerhardt Church, constructed in 1958-1964, were Hermann Fehling and Daniel Gogel.²⁹ Its location is between St. Norbert's Church and the Baroque Schöneberg village church (Dorfkirche Schöneberg).³⁰ The St. Norbert's Church (1960-1962) was also a design of the Fehling and Gogel's partnership during the same period. A brutalist approach characterized the architectural style of both churches, and similar sculptural raw concrete bell towers influenced the Schöneberg silhouette [Fig. 16, 17]. Paul Gerhardt Church features an integrated design with a historic church structure located in the project area before and was damaged during the war. This approach was widespread in Berlin in the post-war period and indicated that respect for the old was a primary consideration in the design process of new religious buildings.

28 A., "Aus Berliner Tagebuchnotizen", 568.

29 The Fehling and Gogel partnership is known for its prominent brutalist works in 1960s Berlin architecture. The most important of these are the Paul Gerhardt Church (1958-1964), the St. Norbert Church (1960-1962), and the Institute for Hygiene and Microbiology (1966-74). These works are characterized by their use of exposed concrete, emphasizing the material aesthetics and their contradictory forms.

30 Voigt and Bernau, *Beton und Glaube*, 75.

Fig. 14
Maria Regina Martyrum
Church, stations of the Cross
by Otto Herbert Hajek (authors
archive, 2022).

Fig. 15
Maria Regina Martyrum Church
apocalyptic Woman by Fritz
Koenig (authors archive, 2022).



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The design of the new church's facade was oriented to the existing one [Fig. 18]. Designed between 1907 and 1910 by architect Ricard Schultze, the old church was one of the few pure Art Nouveau churches in Berlin. The longitudinal axis of the church was characterized by a closure at both ends, analogous to an abscissa. The main entrance hall, accessed from the street side, was semicircular. The abscissa opposite the entrance hall constituted the altar area.³¹ The building had a capacity of 1200 people and a floor area of approximately 53 by 28 meters.³² The reconstruction of this building, which was damaged during World War II, was the subject of a project together with the construction of a new, modern church. The surviving part of the old church (part of the abscissa) was designed as a separate chapel connected to the chapel of the new church [Fig. 19].

The constructivist subconscious that characterized the architectural atmosphere of the 1960s was tempered in Fehling and Gogel's early work by a system of lateral thinking. They had a modest design approach that respected the characteristics of the everyday life culture.³³ Design approaches that integrate with, rather than compete with, historical buildings exemplify this.

The unique roof design characterized the Paul Gerhardt Church. A dynamic, secret total space is created under the roof, which, in places, descends from the ceiling to the floor in the form of triangles. Its original form and cubic bell tower make it a landmark for the city and reflect Banham's principle of *memorability as an image*. Gunnar Klack described the roof form of the Paul Gerhardt Church as a *tent-roof* and compared it to the roof of Frank Lloyd Wright's *Unitarian Meeting*

31 Otto Sarrazin, and Friedrich Schultze, "Paul-Gerhardt-Kirche in Schöneberg bei Berlin," *Zentralblatt der Bauverwaltung*, no. 1-2 (1911): 3.

32 Ernst Spindler and Brino Möhring, "Bilderstrecke," *Berliner Architekturwelt*, no. 10, Januar (1911): 400, zlb.de (last accessed November 2024). The authors measured using the plan and linear scale in the link.

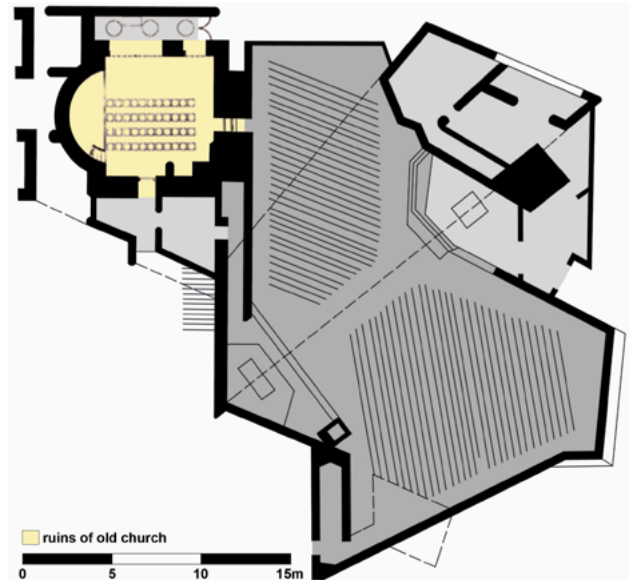
33 Ernst Hubeli, "Fehling und Gogel: signifikante Raumkonstruktionen = Constructions spatiales significatives = Significant spatial constructions," *Baunen + Wohnen*, no. 75 (1988): 24.

Fig. 16
Bell tower of Paul Gerhart
Church (authors archive, 2022).

Fig. 17
Bell tower of St. Norbert
(authors archive, 2022).



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House, an example of a church in organic architecture.³⁴

Banham's principle of *the clear exhibition of structure* can be defined by the room and the exposed concrete load-bearing walls that give the church its basic form. The roof is supported by load-bearing curtain walls visible inside and outside. The openings of the reinforced concrete shell form the facades with a combination of steel structure and glass. The wooden door on the entrance facade is also integrated into this structure. The part of the interior where the organ is located is covered with a wooden sunshade on the facade.

Fehling and Gogel use the essential elements of architecture: light, wall, ceiling, staircase, and structure. Each element is recognizable and irregular, but they are in harmonious balance as a whole. Walls and stairs define the movement of spaces, as do ceilings, which are always easily visible through skylights. In their abstract floor plan analysis, Fehling and Gogel rely on precise formal forms rather than instinctive orientation, and an invisible geometry dominates the design.³⁵ Similarly, the interior of the Paul Gerhardt Church has an open layout of freely formed triangles.³⁶ The church's architects stated that they started the design from the floor plan and then worked on the space. The form of the building emerged at this stage; the facades did not yet exist after the completion of the structural part. The architects designed the facade in the final stage and worked on sketches.³⁷ On the northeastern facade, a large window opens onto the cemetery, symbolizing the eternal communion of saints.³⁸

Despite their spatial complexity and superimposed construction systems, there is no detail in the buildings that does not conform to the properties of

34 Gunnar Klack, *Gebaute Landschaften: Fehling + Gogel und die organische Architektur: Landschaft und Bewegung als Natur-Narrative* (Biefeld: Transcript, 2015), 350.

35 Hubeli, "Fehling und Gogel", 26.

36 Voigt and Bernau, *Beton und Glaube*, 75.

37 Hermann Fehling and Daniel Gogel, "Werkverzeichnis: vollständiges Werkverzeichnis 1947-1988," *Bauen + Wohnen*, no. 75 (1988): 61.

38 Voigt and Bernau, *Beton und Glaube*, 75.

Fig. 18
Paul Gerhardt Church (authors archive, 2022).

Fig. 19
Plan of Paul Gerhardt Church (visualized and scaled by authors based on *Beton und Glaube-Kirchen der Nachkriegsmoderne in Berlin*. Berlin: Archipendiumedition, 2004).

the materials. In line with Banham's principle of the *valuation of materials as found*, even surprising uses of materials are never artificial; ordinary construction materials, such as rough concrete plaster, take on a different expression.³⁹ The roof's soffit is raw concrete, with fine wood mold workmanship applied vertically. There are two different applications on the interior surfaces: a balanced combination of raw concrete material on the ceiling with traces of wood mold and rough concrete plaster on the wall surfaces [Fig. 20]. In addition, the church seating and the organ are made of wood. The gallery with the organ is located on the upper floor at the entrance of the church. The gallery's wooden coverings harmonize with the organ [Fig. 21].

Light is the most crucial parameter for the spiritual atmosphere in the interior.

39 Hubeli, "Fehling und Gogel", 27.



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Fig. 20
Paul Gerhart Church, stained
glass detail (authors archive,
2022).

Fig. 21
Paul Gerhart Church, organ
gallery (authors archive, 2022).

Fig. 22
Altar of Paul Gerhart Church
(authors archive, 2022).

There are skylights between the roof and the walls. The light is most emphasized by the stained-glass window just behind the altar. The colored lights filtering through the stained glass at different angles at various times of the day provide a focus for the altar. Three steps from the ground elevate the altar [Fig. 22].

Conclusion

After World War II, cities began a process of rapid reconstruction, and in Berlin, too, many new residential buildings were constructed. In these residential districts, considerable attention was paid to the reconstruction of religious buildings as an architectural, social, and cultural center for the community, and substantial budgets were allocated. The *brutalist* practice came to the fore in church architecture, which allowed post-war hopes to flourish again and strengthened the sense of unity and solidarity. With its principle of memorability as an image, Brutalism was an ideal model for church designs that needed distinctive forms among the massive housing projects built after the war. In addition, concrete as a new building material came to the fore as a symbol of democratic transformation with the possibilities it offered to the desire for new forms. The use of raw materials and the exhibition of the structure provided a unity between the search for “honesty” of this period and the ethics of Brutalism.

The reconstruction process was twofold in Berlin: the reuse of war-damaged churches and the construction of new churches. Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, and Paul Gerhart Church are examples of newly designed churches integrated with war-damaged churches. Marina Regina Martyrum Church is a new design as a memorial church. The architectural design of all three churches fulfills the brutalist principles defined by Reyner Banham. Kaiser Wilhelm Church is characterized by the unique detailing of its facades, which are made of prefabricated concrete modules. This detail, which arises from integrating concrete material and stained-glass art, adds spirituality to the interior space under the influence of blue with the hit of light. Maria Regina Martyrum Church is a work ahead of its time, integrating the dialogue of art and architecture not only in the altarpiece but also in the entire church. The interior of the altar wall is depicted with a painting. This depiction defines a *unique sanctuary* with a controlled intake of light and the display of structural elements as exhibition objects. Paul Gerhart Church is an urban landmark with its sculptural bell tower and tent-roof. Colorful stained-glass patterns reflected by light on the angled raw concrete walls of the altar create a spiritual atmosphere. As is seen, the altar space in all three churches has acquired a spiritual quality with unique characteristics under the influence of color and light. The churches are still in use and excellent condition today. Kaiser Wilhelm Memorial Church, located in the center of Berlin and its symbolic value, continues to be a tourist attraction and hosts events. Maria Regina Martyrum Church is both a parish church and a memorial church, while Paul Gerhart Church continues to serve mainly the local community of Schöneberg. Despite the destruction and suffering of the war, these churches emphasized hope with their expressionist forms, created a calm effect in the

interior using raw materials and provided a spiritual atmosphere with the effect of light and colors.

In contrast to other post-war architectural styles, Brutalism has not disappeared but has evolved and carried its impacts into the 21st century. In contemporary architecture, it continues to be a source of inspiration beyond the principles of Reyner Banham and the architectural patterns of the 1950s-1960s. With current technology and architectural perceptions, new variations of Brutalism can be observed in contemporary architecture and even in churches, albeit in small numbers. Jesus Christus-Der Gute Hirte Church (2000, Frankfurt), St. Canisius Church (2002, Berlin), and Maria-Magdalena Church (2004, Freiburg) are examples of contemporary church architecture in Germany that still display traces of brutal aesthetics.

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