

PRESS RELEASE

The transformed city

The “Am Tacheles” project in Berlin-Mitte

The “Am Tacheles” project breathes new life into a long-neglected space in the heart of Berlin-Mitte. The site, once a bustling department store arcade built in 1908 between Friedrichstraße and Oranienburger Straße, has a rich history. It has gone through various reincarnations, from commercial and industrial uses to political ones, leading to significant partial demolitions from 1980, followed by the occupation of the remaining structure by the artist collective Tacheles, who lent their name to the site. Urban redevelopment, guided by a master plan from the esteemed Basel architectural firm Herzog & de Meuron, has been underway since the mid-2010s. This firm also spearheads the design of many new buildings within the development. The façades of the *SCAPE*, *ORO*, and *FRAME* buildings, as well as the public spaces in between, stand out for their crafted GIMA clinker façades and paving stones, reflecting a custom design approach.

The mixed-use “Am Tacheles” development will in the future encompass all aspects of a metropolitan lifestyle: housing, work, dining, retail, as well as art and culture, spread across ten new buildings with around 85,000 square metres of usable space and more than 45,000 square metres of gross floor area, all anchored by a shared underground foundation. Furthermore, the only remnant of the historical structures, the renowned former art house on Oranienburger Straße, forms an imposing gateway and the freshly renovated core of the entire area covering 25,000 square metres. Considering its storied past, the building’s cultural revival was a necessity. The redesigned spaces and the renovated and extended building envelope now house Fotografiska, a globally renowned Swedish cultural organisation, which infuses the space with a dynamic mix of

photography exhibitions, events, retail, and culinary experiences. The renovation was executed by Herzog & de Meuron, the Swiss architects instrumental in the overall design of the Tacheles area. The architectural intervention included, among other things, the construction of a pyramid roof above and a connecting bridge within the portal, the restoration of the historical natural stone façade and the staircases, where traces of the former use in the form of artistic graffiti were intentionally left visible.

Arched windows and a delicate grid structure of light bricks

Half of the ten projects in the surrounding new development were also designed by Herzog & de Meuron. This includes the two residential buildings, ORO and FRAME. The former is the most striking element in the development, extending along Oranienburger Straße and adjoining the Fotografiska building, with its narrow, pointed corner marking the entrance to Aaron-Bernstein-Platz – one of three public squares in the area. The eight-storey ORO residential building stands out not only for its unusual trapezoidal base but also for its façade design featuring light bricks and windows or loggias framed by arches on all sides. Spread over 3,960 square metres, it houses 14 apartments ranging from 57 to 375 square metres, as well as two commercial units on the ground floor.

A straightforward counterpart is the façade of the neighbouring FRAME building, which faces diagonally opposite Aaron-Bernstein-Platz. As its name suggests, large-format glass surfaces, also framed in light-coloured clinker brick characterise the residential building, predominantly hosting column-free lofts ranging from 75 to 229 square metres in size, with ceiling heights up to 3.82 metres.

On the opposite side of the city block, with narrow façades along Friedrichstraße, the SCAPE project shapes the character of the new Tacheles district. It consists of two eight-storey buildings that impressively frame a long passage and an octagonal square, connected by three striking building bridges at the level of the sixth floors. Towards Friedrichstraße, this part of the ensemble forms a portal and another representative entrance to the development. Around

31,900 square metres of the total area in the SCAPE project are designated for offices, with the remaining approximately 7,600 square metres shared by dining and retail spaces. The façades are characterised by a delicate grid structure of light clinker bricks, which protrude as pilasters from the volume, further emphasising the vertical aspect. Overall, all the individual parts in the ensemble, according to the concept of Herzog & de Meuron, come together to form a harmonious depiction of contemporary urban architecture.

Broken bricks with a dovetail profile

For the broken bricks of all façades, the manufacturer GIMA specially developed three different shades of grey. The associated ceramic shards have a water absorption of only 1.5 percent, which has important implications for the quality of the broken surface. To define the suitable break pattern, various versions were tested. The break needed to be not too rough, yet have a certain tactile quality. A large part of the façades is made of prefabricated clinker parts, which can be easily and efficiently mounted on-site.

In the preliminary stages of the manufacturing process, tests were also conducted in climate chambers, providing insights into the behaviour of the shards under different weather conditions. There were also experiments concerning the adhesive tensile strength and thus the potential longevity of the clinkers cast into the prefabricated parts of the construction. Once again, GIMA's tested system of clinker bricks with a dovetail profiling pressed onto the backs proved highly efficient. The bricks remain inseparably connected to the concrete core of the prefabricated parts.

In total, more than 300 different stone shapes were produced in the factory, partly by hand and partly using pressing tools. Clinker bricks for the prefabricated parts were cut to the correct size in the factory. All waste pieces were recycled within the GIMA plant and reintroduced into production, allowing for a recycling rate of 20% for the project.

Grey and rosé: clay and clinker on the ground

In the loggias of the Oro project, the GIMA Cerpiano+ terrace system was also used as flooring. The clay planks were also given a special colour and a surface with groove specially developed for the project.

The carefully composed image of the entire ensemble includes the interstitial spaces, squares, passages, and paths that run through the “Am Tacheles” development like lifelines. In addition to newly planted trees, the public, semi-public, or private outdoor spaces are adorned with light paving clinkers, arranged either uniformly in rows or grouped into concentric patterns. The stones used for this also came from GIMA. For all paving surfaces, two new colours were developed in shades of grey and a light rosé. A special format measuring 192 x 192 x 80 millimetres and special channel stones measuring 192 x 230 x 80 millimetres were used. The individually developed shards achieve an ultimate flexural load of more than 300 N/mm. The paving clinkers also meet the highest standards of DIN EN 1344 in all respects and even exceed their quality by a considerable margin.

(7196 characters incl. spaces)

Project data

Project name: Am Tacheles development, Berlin
Client: pwr development GmbH
Architects: Herzog & de Meuron, Basel
Façade cladding: GIMA clinker bricks in special format, Cerpiano+ terrace system, GIMA paving clinkers special format 192/192/80 mm and channel stones 192/230/80
Completion: 2023

Images



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On Oranienburger Straße in central Berlin, the ORO residential building creates an urban highlight, marking one of the entrances to the newly constructed “Am Tacheles” development.

Architects: Herzog & de Meuron, Basel

Photo: Koy + Winkel



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The building's narrow east façade, like the other two long display sides, is characterised by arched windows and loggias.

Architects: Herzog & de Meuron, Basel

Photo: Koy + Winkel



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The finely structured shell is clad with clinker bricks in three light grey tones. The break pattern of the manually broken brick contrasts with the smooth surfaces of the windows.

Architects: Herzog & de Meuron, Basel

Photo: Koy + Winkel



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Along Friedrichstraße, the SCAPE project, consisting of two eight-storey buildings, forms an impressive entrance portal to the “Am Tacheles” development. Building sections with flat and sloping roofs harmonise with the surrounding buildings.

Architects: Herzog & de Meuron, Basel

Photo: Koy + Winkel



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An octagonal square is also framed by one of three building bridges on the sixth floor, spanning the passage and impressively connecting the buildings.

Architects: Herzog & de Meuron, Basel

Photo: Koy + Winkel

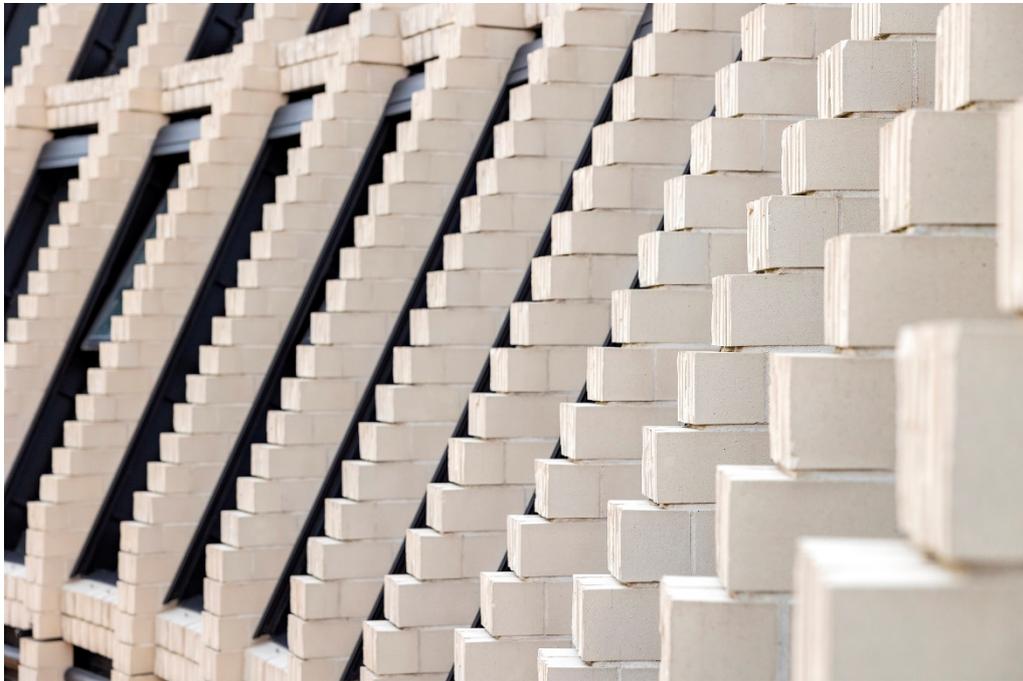


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Bright exposed masonry in the form of GIMA clinker bricks shapes the façades of the new buildings in the historical context along Friedrichstraße.

Architects: Herzog & de Meuron, Basel

Photo: Koy + Winkel

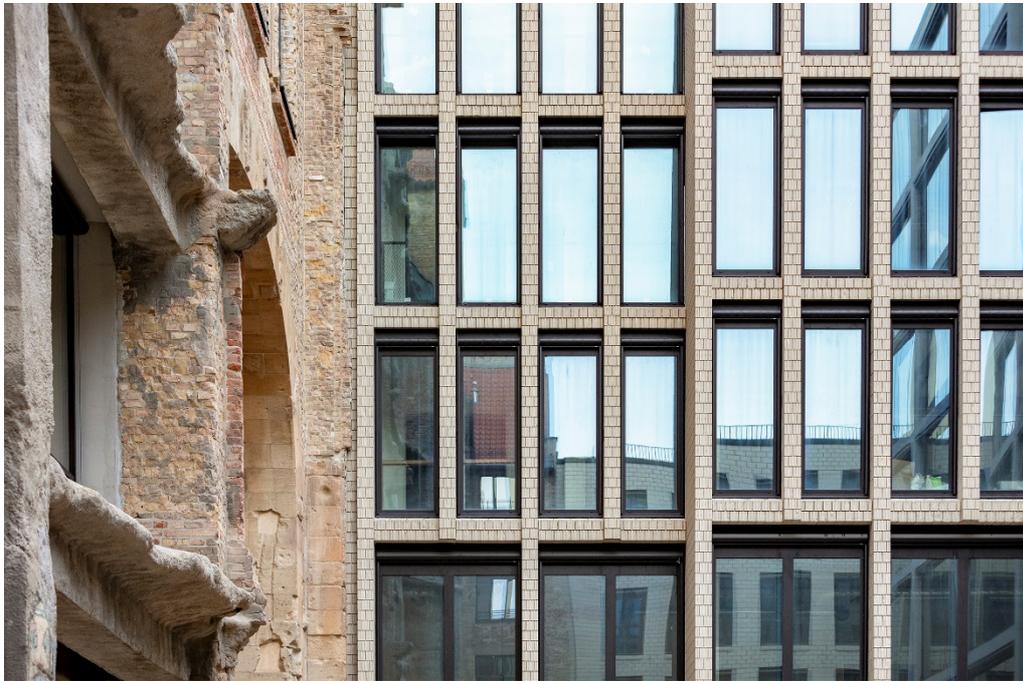


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Parts of the top two floors along the street and towards the passage are executed as inclined roof surfaces, seamlessly continuing the façade design. The pilasters transition into a stepped stone sequence resembling a gable.

Architects: Herzog & de Meuron, Basel

Photo: Koy + Winkel



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The largest project in the ensemble is characterised by a homogeneously designed, delicate grid structure on the façade.

Architects: Herzog & de Meuron, Basel

Photo: Koy + Winkel



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The ten new buildings form a uniformly designed ensemble, whose basic tonality extends into the interstices of squares, paths, and passages. The extremely robust paving clinker is executed in shades of grey and light rosé.

Architects: Herzog & de Meuron, Basel

Photo: Koy + Winkel



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For the paving, mostly square stones in two newly developed colours were used, which in combination create a pattern of concentric circles and radiating lines.

Architects: Herzog & de Meuron, Basel

Photo: Koy + Winkel