



////// MUSEUM OF LETTERS

Nostalgia is a funny thing. A common tendency that when materialised in the form of a frozen moment, especially a massive collection of them gathered together in one place, generates a decidedly unnatural atmosphere. So it is with the Museum of Letters, where isolated fragments of significant entities, people or even films, have been scavenged and lovingly preserved to admire anew, however far out of context.

////// **THOSE WERE THE DAYS**
LOST FOR WORDS

text / SILVIA ANNA BARRILÀ

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Two letter collectors began this careful documentation of typographic objects, letterforms and signage some six years ago, expanding and then relocating only last year to inhabit their Alexanderplatz location.



BARBARA DECHANT AND ANJA SCHULZE
PHOTO BY AART VAN BEZOOYEN © CORE 77



ABOVE LEFT: PHOTO © KILIAN KRUG
ABOVE RIGHT: PHOTO © MICHAEL SETZPFANDT
RIGHT: PHOTO BY AART VAN BEZOOYEN © CORE77

The Berlin Carré Shopping Centre at Alexanderplatz is a place of nostalgia. Here time seems to have halted at the point just before the wall came down, sparing it from all the hype of the new German capital. The neologism Ostalgie, derived from the German words "Ost" (east) and "Nostalgie", defines the atmosphere of the whole building well, from its architecture to its individual premises – the most sentimental place being the Ostpaket shop, which sells everyday goods and brands from the ex-GDR.

LITERALLY YOURS

This context is the ideal backdrop for the Buchstabenmuseum, or Museum of Letters, the first and probably only museum devoted to preserving and documenting typographic objects, letterforms and signage extracted from public spaces in Berlin and around the world. Founded in 2005 by two passionate 'letter collectors', Barbara Dechant and Anja Schulze, it started out as a depot at Frankfurter Tor, and then expanded in 2010, relocating to the Berlin Carré.



In times of global financial and economic crisis, the Museum of Letters recalls small family-run businesses that have since disappeared and big companies that contributed to the reconstruction of Germany after the war, turning the country into an economic powerhouse, and includes signage and lighting fixtures that have since become part of the collective urban memory. The museum not only researches and documents their stories, but investigates their unique typographic qualities and manufacturing processes as well.



ABOVE: © BUCHSTABENMUSEUM
ABOVE RIGHT: PHOTO © AARON R.



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GIMME AN H...

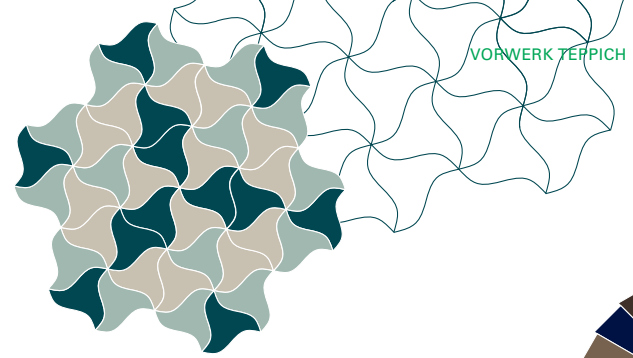
Among the relics are the 'H' of Hauptbahnhof (central station), which fell down when it was downgraded to Ostbahnhof (east station); the 'E' of Albert Einstein that decorated the city during the 50th anniversary commemoration of his death; and another 'E', this one from the set of Quentin Tarantino's film 'Inglorious Bastards'

– the only letter that survived the Cinema Le Gamaar explosion. But also to be found here are entire names of businesses both small and large, from shipping company Harry W. Hamacher to car corporation Daimler Chrysler, from national energy providers BEWAG and AEG to the international hotel chain Holiday Inn.

Pride of place is reserved for the Zierfische (ornamental fishes), pretty neon creatures designed by Manfred Gensicke – author of many other Berlin signs – to symbolise the most famous pet shop in town, a gem that survived an attempted theft (luckily the ladder wasn't long enough)!

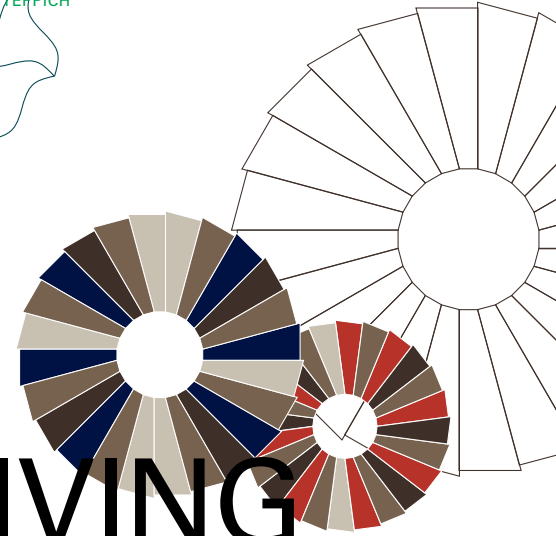
Typography experts and nostalgic citizens alike are welcome to support Museum of Letters activities by becoming a Friend of the museum. The registration fee is equal to the numbers of letters in the name of the aspirant member, while the annual membership fee is 26 Euros: 21 Euros for the consonants and 5 Euros for the vowels! /

IMAGES: EXCEPTIONAL PIECES FROM THE REMAKE OF THE BUCHSTABENMUSEUM, BY THE COBURG UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES
WWW.BUCHSTABENMUSEUM.DE



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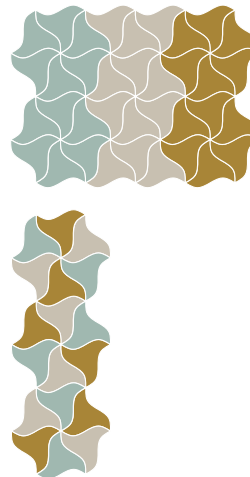


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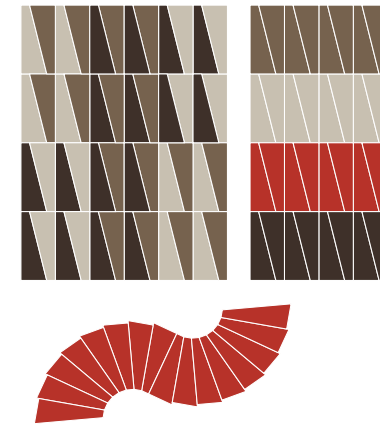
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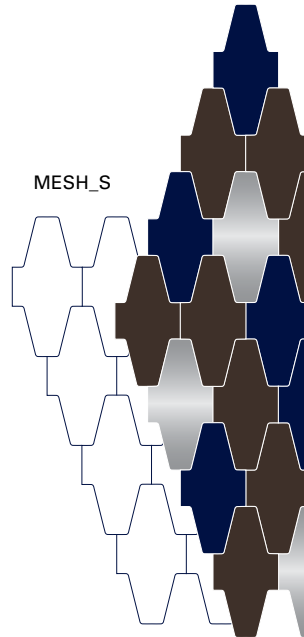
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