



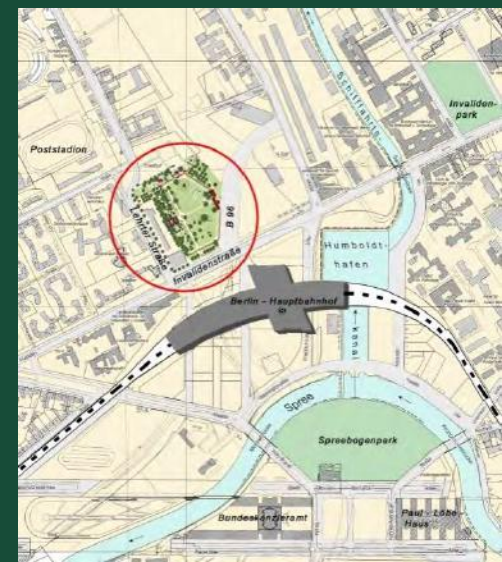
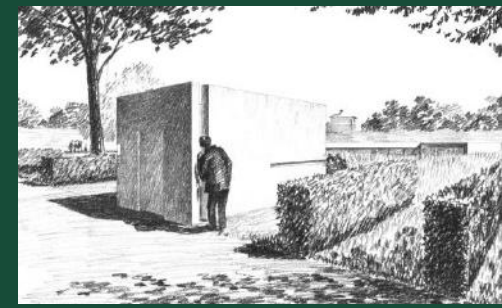
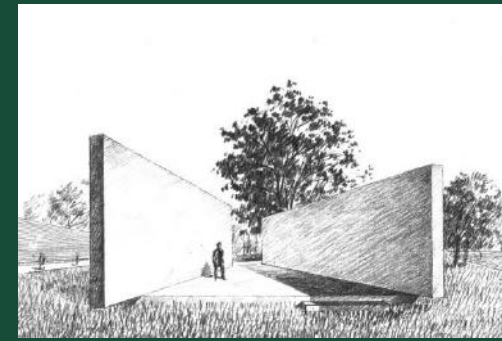
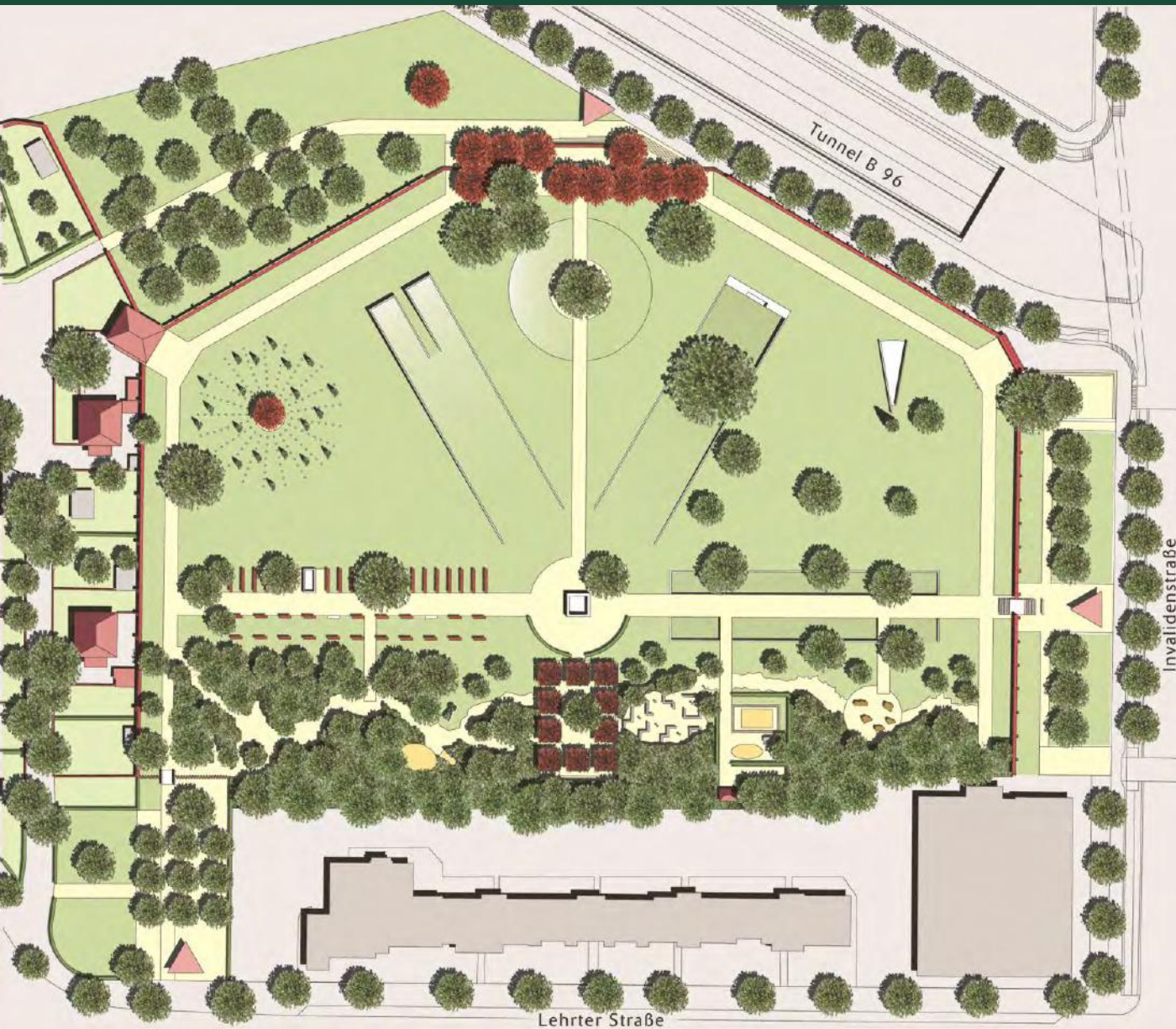
glasser and dagenbach

landscape architects bdla, IFLA

Moabit Prison Historical Park, Berlin, Germany

glasser and dagenbach
breitenbachplatz 17
14195 berlin

tel +49 (0) 30 / 618 10 80
fax +49 (0) 30 / 612 70 96
info@glada-berlin.de
www.glada-berlin.de



The park's theme and urban planning and its architectural and political history are unique to **Berlin's** urban landscape. The task of creating both a memorial and an area for people to relax and learn has been accomplished in an exemplary manner. Historical landmarks have been preserved, restored and enhanced using contemporary styling. The dramaturgical approach of minimalist sculptural design principles once again anchors the structural remains permanently in the disordered urban space of the neighbouring Central Station. Local people and visitors to Berlin can rediscover the **site's** historical significance after more than 50 years of inaccessibility and enjoy its recreational resources. The prison was erected 150 years ago following a penal reform as a pentagonal, panoptic brick building modelled on Pentonville Prison in London. The cellular prison, which once dominated the cityscape, no longer exists. Most of the prison buildings were demolished between 1956 and 1958. The remaining five-metre-high prison walls were meticulously restored. Like two angled arms, they protect the large, open interior grounds from intrusion. The space inside the high prison walls now constitutes a *hortulus conclusus* – which would hardly have been the case had the park been designed using “**conventional**” planning methods. Creating a protected interior space was a conscious attempt to reverse the former use of the site. Following a well-defined dramaturgical

concept, framework landscaping on the park surface conveys the symmetrical layout of the prison compound, giving visitors a notion of the **complex's** dimensions and strict organization. The star-shaped facility is mirrored in various concrete-enclosed tectonic indentations and elevations in the interior lawn. The eastern wings are depicted in their full width and length as rising and falling grassy slopes creating a mega-sculpture in the spacious park. The northern cell block is set in an existing grove. This sector has therefore been reshaped less dramatically. Hedgerows made of red beech trees recast the cells in various alignments. Concrete walls recreate one cell as a visitor-accessible sculpture in its original dimensions. A uniformly sunken lawn outlines the south wing. The former central surveillance sector is interpreted as a circular space with a frame-like concrete cube in the middle. To the west, towards a six-to-ten-storey building barrier in Lehrter Straße, a sparse wood-like vegetation screen acts as a type of woods, shielding the park optically from adjoining residences. The new pines, birches and acacias extend the existing grove to the south. In the middle of this “**woody structure**”, three rows of cubed red beeches indicate where the former location of the administration wing once stood. The three former walking sheds for yard exercise were situated between the cell wings.

They are now portrayed using various interpretations of their earlier function. In the southeast section of the landscape one of these triangular boxes is strikingly visualized by two obliquely aligned concrete discs. **"Jumping in a triangle"** is a slang expression for **inmates'** confined outdoor exercise in the three-corner enclosures. To the east, a circular indentation in the lawn demonstrates the size of the entire exercise facility. In its centre, enclosed in a concrete wall, stands an old walnut tree – a relic of the transformation of the walkways into decorative greenery at the beginning of the 20th century.

All concrete components are the colour of sand, similar to the mortar of the brick walls. The sandblasted, damaged surface of the concrete conveys a sense of affliction and oppression and attests to the **area's** legacy as a place of injury and infliction. In the north, the exercise **yard's** former central surveillance area is emphasized by a centrally positioned red maple in a dark cinder bed. Arranged in a radial form, imbedded concrete circles portray the separation of the walking sheds. A columnar juniper has been planted in each pen, creating a surreal gathering of "yardbirds". Inside the high prison walls, the proposed measures divide the park into two zones. In the east, the spacious, empty lawn with the clear depiction of the prison buildings is contrasted and complemented by the sparse wooded arrangement opposite the adjoining housing. The strict layout of the segmented

lawn collides with the melancholy, romantic backdrop of the lightly vegetated margin of the woods edge. This division makes it possible to integrate necessary park features such as play and rest areas without harming the dignity of the site. The sparse woods are accessible on a trail-like network of paths. Parallel granite curbs cross the trails at irregular intervals, creating a stripe pattern throughout. Large quantities of the curbing were stored on the property. Play facilities are inconspicuously arranged along the woodland paths. In the central portion of the wooded area we find the only remaining building in the former prison complex – the old weighing house. A sand play area has been constructed here for small children. The restoration of the weighing house facilitates temporary use by supervised play parties (storage of recreational equipment, etc.) and storage of irrigation and sprinkling control components. The earlier use of the property as the Tiergarten Civil Engineering Department depot made widespread sedimentation a part of the history of the site. This chapter is **"recounted"** in the wooded periphery. Special materials such as the slate block remains of the fountains in front of the zoo and the remainder of the Moltkebrücke sandstone are arranged with the remnants of natural stone paving in the circular installation of a Japanese rock garden made of archaeological artefacts. The Moabit Ratschlag Club organized a cooperative project between children, teenagers and four artists to landscape three sides

of the western section of the park as foreseen by the Borough of Mitte. The concrete sculpture which represents the prison cell was enhanced by a sound installation based on an idea proposed and coordinated by the lyricist and filmmaker Christiane Keppler. It is composed of code-like **“knocking signals”** and recitations of passages from Albrecht Haushofer’s **“Moabit Sonnets”** which can be heard upon entering the cell. This work was accompanied by schoolchildren. The western wooded sector was enhanced with a climbing wall and a sitting wall, based on the theme of a key. Sculptor Bärbel Rothhaar, children from Moabit schools and local residents engraved key signs and fragments of poems in bricks, which they then fired and subsequently arranged into a wall for relaxation. The key theme is also found in a wooden climbing wall designed by Rothhaar and local youths. At the former weighing house, sculptors Gabriele Roskamp and Serge Petit devised a star labyrinth. They used granite curbs left on the site and surplus stones from the storage yard to create a labyrinthine installation. Stars were the only shapes prisoners could decipher from their cells at night. Under the guidance of the sculptors, neighbourhood children chiselled constellations into the stone remnants. A passage of the Haushofer sonnet **“In Fetters”** was inscribed in the northeast section of the former prison wall. Christiane Keppler selected the passage and the lettering: **“From** all the sorrow that permeates the masonry and iron bars, stirs a breath of life and clandestine

shivers...” The inner part of the park is traversed by asphalt and gravel paths which follow the preserved prison walls, leading to the three park entrances. A north-south axis of asphalt paving, similar to the original surface of the ground floor, connects the western Cell Wings A and D. The three entrances to the interior of the park are designed in very different ways. In the south, one gains admittance through a breach in the wall from Invalidenstraße. The arrangement and style of the breach express a dramaturgical concept. Direct views from the street and from the park are blocked by a concrete disc positioned in front of the prison wall. A series of frame-like concrete arches runs along the wall and leads into the inner park area on the axis of former Cell Wings A and B. The play of light and shadow on the arches and the reduced vision into and out of the park gradually opens into a total view of the central sector and of the park. In the east, visitors can get a glimpse of the park from a square formed according to the layout of the former **“insanity ward”**. This was once the **prison’s** places of execution. A folded entrance structure, shaped like a rectangular origami, creates an opening in the fence and copper beech hedge. In the west, the park can be accessed from a square on Lehrter Straße adorned by nine newly planted lindens. All three sides have information boards designed and worded in conjunction with the Tiergarten History Workshop. When the park is closed at night, the locked entrance gates display the layout of the prison.











