

**THE DNA
FOR »THE LIVING HOUSE«
AN EXCEPTIONAL PUBLIC ART PROJECT**

OVERVIEW

INTRODUCTION

Vienna/Dresden. A dead house is being brought back to life and is now opening its doors. It's an easy story to tell.

A vacant building in a prominent, historically charged location is being revitalized with the aid of creativity – with the aid of art. And now a large percent-for-art project has started to shine, to sound, to oscillate: the »DNA« of artist SHA. stretches over 150 metres through the entire Lebendiges Haus (Living House). The existing architecture is evolving with the urban space into a »Holistic Design«.

FROM THE PAST

1963: The 600-year-old Sophienkirche, the sole surviving Gothic church in Dresden, is torn down in an arbitrary decision by the GDR government and replaced by the GDR's largest gastronomy project – a large canteen, known as »Fresswürfel« (feeding cube) in common parlance. Directly opposite the world-famous Zwinger palace.

1998: Considered an eyesore, the building was demolished and replaced by a new build after the reunification of Germany. The so-called »Haus am Zwinger« is constructed in a modern style by the Austrian architect Heinz Tesar after an international competition. Objections by the population concerning the historical significance of the site are largely ignored. The development of the building is tentative, it is only partly occupied, changes owner on a number of occasions and ultimately stands empty. A sad sight to behold at a prominent location.

2016: Specialized in redevelopment, the German property development group Denkmalneu buys the building and, together with the Viennese artist SHA., develops a new real estate concept on the basis of the existing building: »Das Lebendige Haus« (The Living House). More than 50 years after the GDR's arbitrariness, the building of the present tries to build a sensitive bridge between the past and the future.

IN THE PRESENT

Now, after a long beauty sleep, the site has been brought back to life. A fairy tale? No ... Reality!

A core element of this new reality is »creativity« – the symbol of life. You can feel creativity in several places in this Lebendiges Haus (Living House): art flows through the entire building, inside and outside. It is art that was specially developed for this property. The artist SHA. closely accompanied the creation of The Living House and created the DNA for the building – as an »energetic backbone«.

Lights, colours, sounds and oscillations produce the distinctive spatial atmosphere. A glass double helix winds its way over 150 metres through the entire building. Its path takes it from the existing architecture to a holistic design. Because the DNA oscillates in its own temporal dimension.

The opportunity to »decelerate« opens a connection channel between the ages: from the spirit of the Sophienkirche to a new space of sensory reflection in the middle of our high-performance society. As the artist SHA. says: »*The immaterial value that emerges in an individual is the value of this art.*«

BACK TO THE FUTURE

Das Lebendige Haus (The Living House) will stay alive. The art will change over the course of time; it will adapt to the residents. But the building's residents, tenants and guests will also change due to the art – ideally they will be inspired by the art. The future will tell whether or not that works ...

The distinctive service structure of the building will definitely grow with the people. And the mix of authentic shops, 5* design apartments, cool lofts, functional offices, a conference centre, an event location and the roof terrace with the most stunning view in Dresden will guarantee vitality.

CONCEPT

THE INITIAL SITUATION

The task: revitalize a building with art.

»Wellness for Buildings«

The so-called »Haus am Zwinger« stands at a prominent position, right at the heart of the city of Dresden, opposite the famous Zwinger palace. The building appears to be a functional, purpose-built building, which could not find any successful use over the past 15 years – practically since it was constructed.

Specialized in redevelopment, the German property development group Denkmalneu buys the building and gives the entire site a creative mixed use. In the process, a novel, holistic design concept emerges jointly with the Austrian artist SHA: »Das Lebendige Haus« (The Living House).

THE IDEA BEHIND THE ARTWORK

»Das Lebendige Haus« (The Living House) implies that there is – or was – also a »Dead House«. Hence from a larger perspective, the project is about revitalization, a kind of revival, indeed an awakening. It seemed to us a good idea to not only thoughtfully and strategically prepare such an existential step inwards, but to explicitly show it outwards, too – to allow it to make an appearance. So it is about appearance, about ensoulment ... about »inspiration«. It is in this sense that our suggestion for a new face for the building should be understood.

An extension of the building's shell, a second skin, that turns itself inwards. We are talking about a light, quasi immaterial shell, indeed a kind of »aura« of light and sound that ensures vitality. Formally based on an organic language of forms that seems alive, a curved wave instead of strict, pragmatic geometry. Lightness instead of heaviness. Bright colourfulness instead of monotonous grey. Dynamism and change instead of rigidity and stasis. A new sign of life, of change, on the building, on the site, on site in Dresden.

THE PHILOSOPHICAL INSPIRATION

Time is a function of space.

And space is an astonishing function of time.

This realization provides the impulse for the formal development of the artwork. As such, time is contained in space, in front of us, in us.

Then we simply take what is there, the status quo. We take the solid, the solidly built grid of this functional architecture and put it in motion through an artistic intervention. We »dynamize« this building. We re»organ«ize this building's structure and do so with means that are directly derived from its architecture. We do so by means of a digital network structure that we derive directly from the existing physical and architectural conditions on site.

Which opens up a TimeSpace – or indeed a SpaceTime – that produces an additional profundity in everyday life in Dresden: previous time, when the house stood idle, and subsequent time, when it will be revived, continue to live alongside one another in this profundity. And yes, the time when, having stood on precisely this site for 600 years, the Sophienkirche became Dresden's only Gothic church to be torn down against the will of the population in an arbitrary act by the GDR government. Where the pain, where the wound of this city is still perceptible: there, art is light.

Art as a skin of light, as an aura of light is a powerful symbol for a deep understanding of vitality. This light is a point of connection, quasi the »wormhole« that connects dimensions – between the dead house and The Living House, between past and future. A space-time reflection with a historical and social dimension. Healing.

THE VISUAL CONCEPT

From the serial façade of the existing architecture we derive intersections, an entire network of intersections, which we now start to play with.

In the beginning there is the point. The point of light. Then it becomes several points of light, which form a line when they are observed. At first, one line, then several lines that form a surface, a shell, a dynamic strip. That then transforms into the Möbius strip – a wondrous two-dimensional structure that has just *one* edge and *one* surface and in which we are consequently unable to differentiate between the inside and the outside.

That then becomes the wave, as a symbol of vitality and change. A wave that almost lovingly winds around the – far too strictly and geometrically organized – building, indeed »touches« it lovingly. Then various wave shapes grow out of the wave, the pulsating sine waves – as a symbol of the pulse beat of life, quite simply THE »proof of life«. Plastic, almost trivial symbolism that everyone knows from countless film motifs. The heartbeat.

Eventually, the wave forms, Möbius strips and light lines overlap to create a helix, a double helix. It reminds us of the human lifeline – the DNA.

THE BASIC THEME: THE DNA

DNA is a biomolecule and carries genetic information, i.e. genes. The shape of the DNA – the double helix – inspired the outward appearance of our »DNA for Das Lebendige Haus (The Living House)«. We see our DNA as »immaterial architecture«, as the energetic backbone for a building that first of all stands on inauspicious, historically charged soil and that was unable to gain momentum in its further development, and that ultimately had to experience many years of vacancy.

This project, therefore, is in the truest sense of the word a »revitalization« – and DNA plays a significant role in that. In epigenetics we recognize – in contrast to conventional teachings on genetics – that it does indeed depend on the individual and their environment as to which characteristics embedded in their DNA will become pronounced and developed – and which will be shut down, so to speak. Hence, as living beings, we are not genetically (pre-)determined, we are not at the mercy of our genes.

Our stem cells preserve a certain flexibility ...
Meaning that the nucleus can actually influence the DNA lying within it.

We have interpreted this recent scientific insight within the field of genetics as a life-affirming fundamental motif for our Living House.

SOUND AS AN INFORMATION CARRIER

While the visual structure of DNA appears to be very clear, clean and pure thanks to the geometry of luminous glass rods, the accompanying sounds we hear develop a counterpoint: often an indistinct, dirty, noisy sound aesthetic emerges in the space – sounds that are alien, seem mystical, as if they were from another dimension. Sometimes the artistic sound also combines with the pre-existing, everyday noises here in Dresden; the two become one, they blend together. Sometimes, however, the artwork also forms a sharp contrast to the everyday sounds that surround it. In one case harmony, in one case dissonance.

These man-made sounds originate on the one hand from the space itself (e.g. recordings in the staircase), on the other from an extended, sacred context (e.g. motets that used to be sung in the Sophienkirche at precisely this location). The original sounds were consolidated and transformed by a digital »space-time machine«. These abstract sound landscapes are then projected back into the real space via the glass DNA structure, where they reflect on the walls – on the actually built space. This interaction between real space and imaginative space constitutes an important level of the artwork.

THE AESTHETICS OF SLOWNESS

Both inside and outside, the DNA is experienced as a creative design element that gives this building a very stand-alone character. The lights, colours, sounds and oscillations wind over 150 metres through staircases, entrances, thoroughfares, out to the terrace and the façade. The changes in the DNA deliberately teeter at the threshold of perception.

This artwork is not a »shouting« action, not a sensational performance that is like a punch in the face, but rather a subtle, sensitive intervention in the middle of the everyday space of the building. The aesthetics are borne by fine nuances, almost endlessly slow change processes and by a spatial depth, complexity: the sounds are mostly restrained, delicate sound-colour compositions, softly oscillating, floating, vibrating air.

And it's not clear where they come from; they fill these high staircases, this apparently empty space in this building, with sensory information. The lights and colours change and transform in time with the sounds. The DNA's two strands of light make each other oscillate: at one point they resonate in harmony and at another point they »dissonate« in two colours of light that subtly push toward one another – a rubbing together at the observer's threshold of perception.

SENSORYSPACE AS A NEW SANCTUARY

Through these aesthetics of slowness, the hurried passer-by defies the deeper significance of this art in such a staircase. It is almost as though these sounds, lights, colours and oscillations deliberately wanted to »force« us to pause for a moment. I.e. stand still and yet be en route at the same time. Because only then does the actual, deeper quality present itself, that which lies behind this spatial installation.

In the middle of our everyday lives, we seem to recognize a highly complex and simultaneously secretive structure of sensory impressions in the background of being. Sounds, lights, colours and oscillations that open

new connection channels between the ages in individuals themselves. The immaterial value that this evokes in the individual is the true value of this art. In this sense we can speak here of a new kind of »SacredSpace«.

THE SENSE OF SUCH SENSORYSPACES

SensorySpaces by SHA. let you immerse yourself in a new perception of time and space. They give you a feeling of »deceleration and dissolution«. They achieve this thanks to their special, holistic aesthetics – thanks to a spatial design for all senses and with all senses. SHA. calls that HOLISTIC DESIGN.

The aim of these SensorySpaces is to strengthen the connection between people and their surroundings. SHA. wants to strengthen the resonance between the self and the world, people and space, inside and outside, ultimately the material and the immaterial. As a result, you expand your own, individual horizon of perception.

Ultimately you will strengthen your intuition, your inspiration and your innovative energy. And on a social level experiences like this strengthen our sense of appreciation and tolerance, inwards and outwards – beyond fundamentalism and arrogance.

Art as immaterial architecture

FACTS

THE ARTIST

SHA. creates art for the everyday.

In doing so, he transcends the boundaries of the everyday. With his art he explores human perception – our senses. He designs »SensorySpaces« for holistic experiences. SHA. lives in Vienna. His projects can now be found at over 300 locations in 35 countries. They have won many international awards. For more information on SHA, go to www.sha-art.com

THE CONTRACTING BODY

DENKMALNEU continues to revitalize buildings.

Regardless whether they are old factory buildings in ruin or office buildings standing empty. The new concepts for re-architecture and re-use pursue one aim: the result should be places where life takes place in perpetuity. DENKMALNEU creates spaces to live, work and have fun. The consortium from southern Germany develops and runs buildings across the country. For more information on DENKMALNEU, go to www.denkmalneu.com