

The WSCA visit to Berlin, November 2003

Destinations for the society's visits this year have shared a common theme of regeneration within the city. Firstly Bilbao in January and then to the vast fractured metropolis of Berlin in mid-November.

In the two days available, most of the party focused on the headlining grabbing architecture of Potsdammer Platz and The Reichstag, of which none were disappointing. Both shared a scale and vision that is rarely so successful in projects that are designed to knit a city back together, within a minimal time-span.

On Saturday afternoon it was a walk beyond Potsdammer to see Mies van der Rhoë's National Gallery of Art, where a surprise exhibition was waiting in the form of "Content" by Rem Koolhaas. Underneath the huge Miesian oversailing, steel roof were models, drawings, films and photographs that displayed the output over the last few years of The Office of Metropolitan Architecture. The exhibition was to coincide with the opening of the Dutch Embassy in Berlin by Koolhaas that is set to become another fantastic government building in the city. Wilford, and Schultes have also made magnificent contributions.

Sunday was a day for a relaxing and thought-provoking walk to Check Point Charlie and around The Jewish Museum by Libeskind, where another showing of the architects multi-media work was on display.

For those of us who had not visited Berlin before it was a chance to see all these symbols of urban regeneration that add to the complex and ever changing townscape. For those familiar with the city, the trip offered a glimpse of the peripheral projects that indicate the staggering wealth of new architecture throughout the city including the 'No Mans Land' memorial by Peter Eisenmann and the crematorium by Axel Schultes.

The trip was, again a great success and was enjoyed by all. Any suggestions for the next visit would be welcomed.

Simon Rea, Glazzard Architects
7th January 2004.