

Marx-Engels-Forum

BERLIN



POLA

The open area called “Park an der Spree” in the historic centre of Berlin was one of the central green spaces in the Mitte district. It dates back to the Second World War, when the Heilig-Geist quarter located there was destroyed, prompting the GDR leadership to demolish it. Since then, the area between Karl-Liebknecht-Strasse in the north, the park by the TV Tower in the east, Rathausstrasse in the south and the Spree in the west has remained undeveloped. Since the 1990s, the future of the area has been debated. Ideas range from the reconstruction of the Heilig-Geist quarter to the establishment of a park at the Marx-Engels-Forum, the latter of which has prevailed. In the spring of 2021, Berlin’s senatorial administration invited entries for an ideas competition.

*Karl and Friedrich sitting
and waiting.
Marx and Engels, those two.
Unseparable, here at least.
And back then, in East Berlin.
Chuckling pupils
pointing stealthily
at the rigid faces.
Almost no reverence
for the rigid ideals.
Background image
for school trips.
Even today – husks of history,
doomed to be a motif of photos,
as proof: “We were here!”
Once upon in the east. And today?
Can you still see us standing there
with the red neckerchief?
If only we could learn to see them
with new eyes.
With a wink
and the certainty of history:
All is connected.*

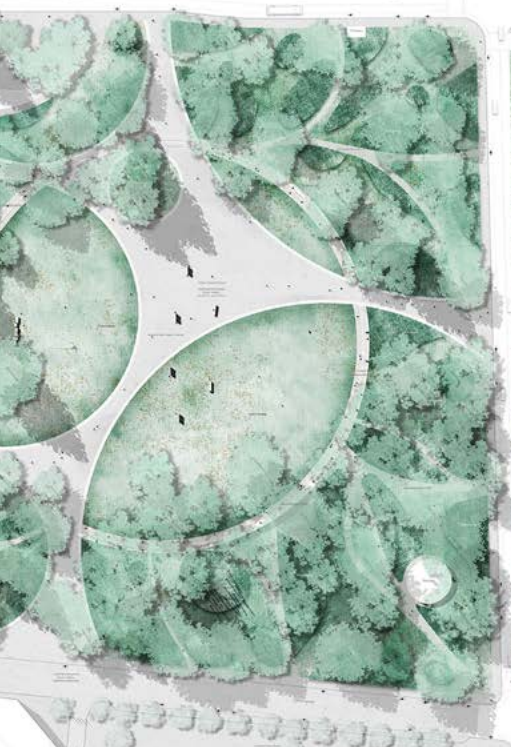
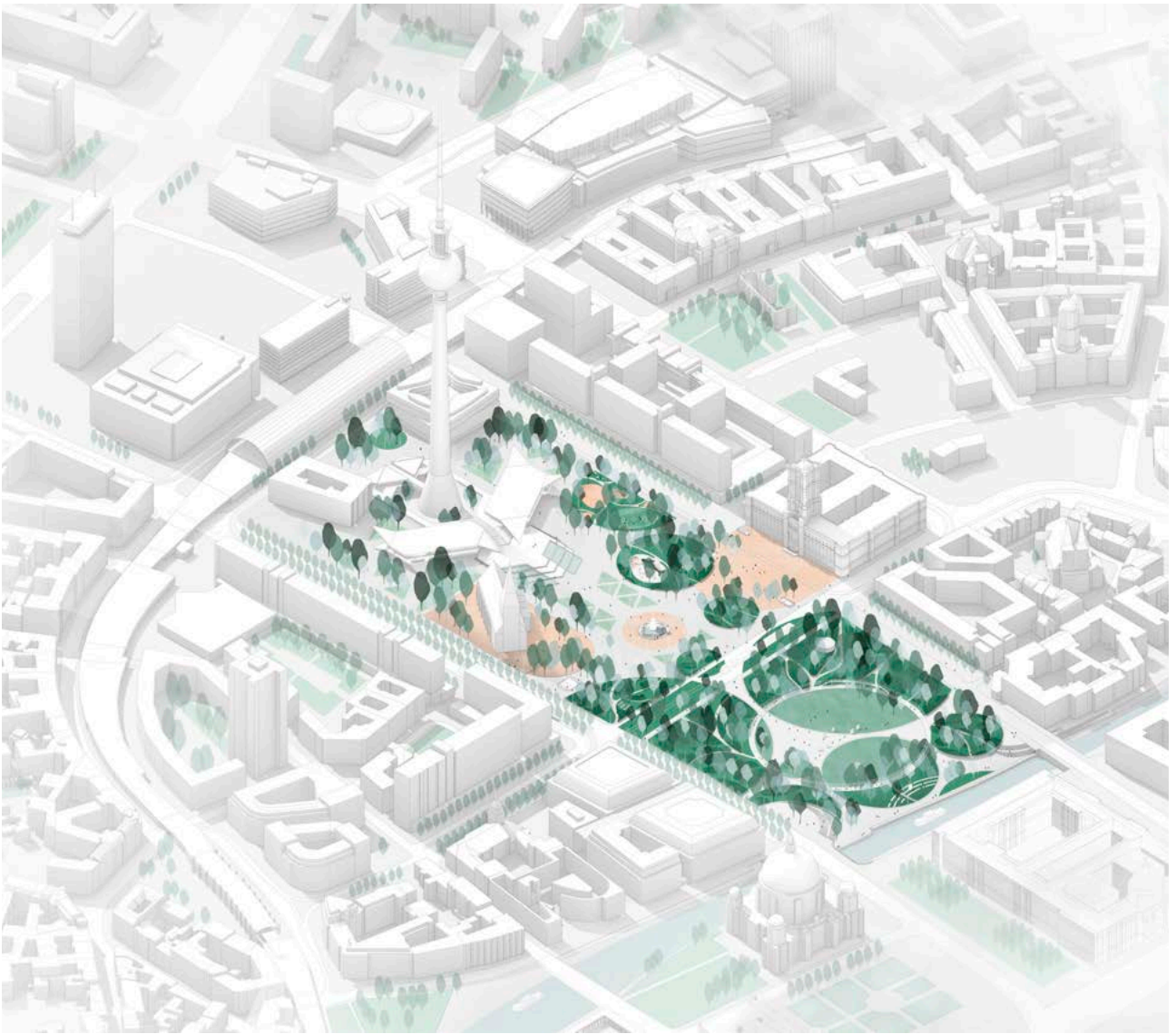
POLA was among the 21 landscape architecture firms that advanced to the second phase. According to its plan, the Rotes Rathaus (Red City Hall), Marienkirche (St. Mary’s Church), Neptunbrunnen (Neptune Fountain) and the monument ensemble of Marx and Engels as well as the ensemble around the TV Tower with its rose beds and water basins will remain structurally unchanged. However, they will be woven into the new Marx-Engels Park as historical and architectural urban artefacts, like individual sequins of a dress, creating new relationships between them.

The jury’s assessment of the design goes as follows:

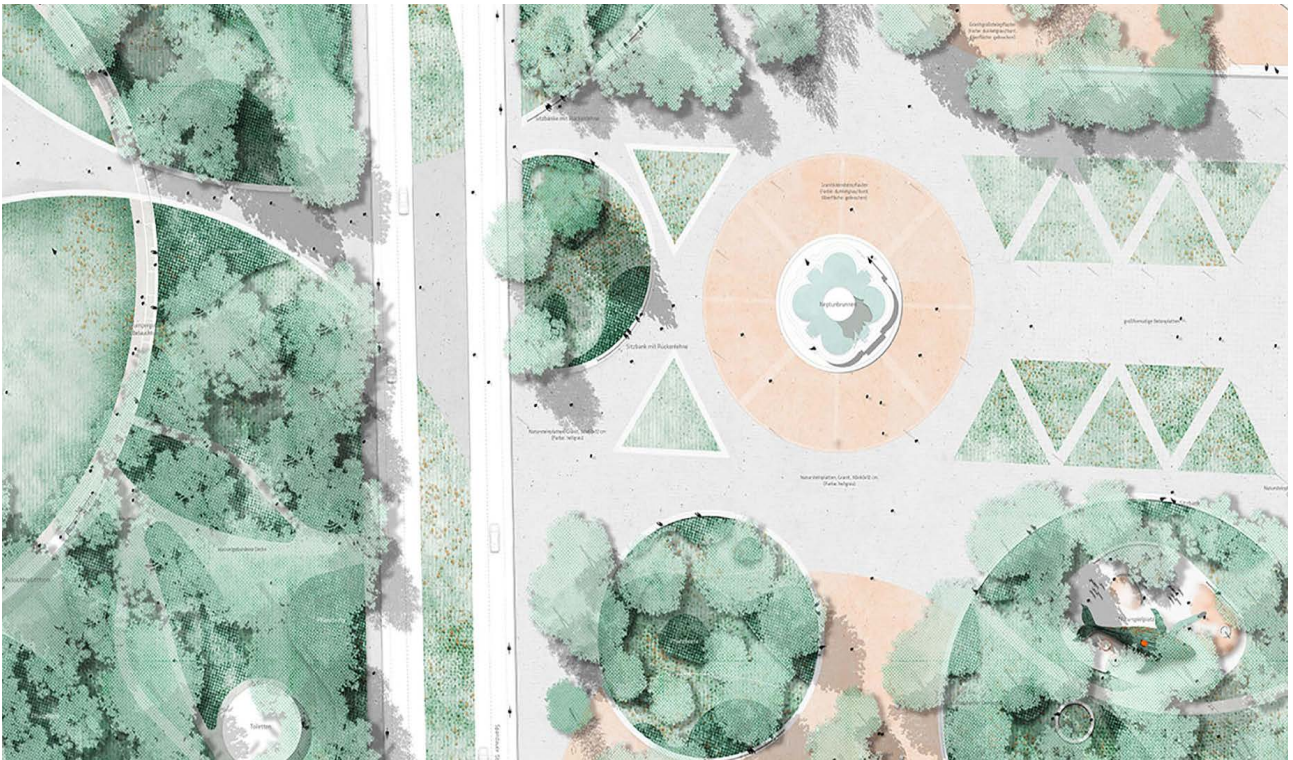
“The author claims to use a metaphorical approach that connects everything, and their work certainly fulfils this claim. The existing circle is developed into a leitmotif for the entire planning area in a formally clever way. The circle motif appears self-assertively as an independent and site-specific addition to the historical triangular geometry. The design succeeds in integrating historical links and pathways with new connections in a meaningful way. The multiplication and superimposition of circular forms connects the subareas with each other – new cohesion is created without the use of any additional formal language. (...) The design treats the existing axial structure with respect. The unmodified rose beds are linked with the Neptune Fountain by a carpet of paving. (...) Generous staircases connect the adjoining urban spaces with the Spree river. (...)

The provocative treatment of Marx and Engels – the monument is integrated into the new riverside steps and faces the Humboldt Forum – is a contentious issue: on the one hand, the author creates a reinterpretation that is comprehensible in terms of content, but from the point of view of monument preservation, it lacks the appropriate respect for the ensemble. Overall, the work offers a coherent, independent basis for the further development of Berlin’s centre, and a welcome atmospheric complement to the stone Humboldt Forum. Successive implementation and elaboration seems feasible.”









Project data

Project Marx-Engels-Forum

Location Berlin, GER

Client Berlin Senate Department for Urban Development, Building and Housing

Planning period 2021

Planning Competition

Size 72.000 m²

Competition 3rd prize, 2021

Images POLA



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