

Spree-dreieck

Berlin, Germany 2001

In 2001 the Berlin newspaper Der Tagespiegel invited five architectural practices (David Chipperfield Architects; Bothe, Richter, Teherani; Eisenman Architects; Gerkan, Marg and Partner; and Nalbach + Nalbach) to submit study proposals for a skyscraper project, situated along the city's Friedrichstrasse on the south west corner of the river Spree. Unlike other, more famous, newspaper-sponsored architectural competitions – notably the Chicago Tribune Tower competition of 1922 – no building was ever intended to be realised; rather the study simply acted as a gentle provocation for Berlin's planning authorities and the newspaper's readership. More than the Chicago Tribune competition, however, the historical associations of this architectural brief resonate more strongly with an earlier Berlin project.

On this same site in 1921 Ludwig Mies van der Rohe produced his famous scheme for a glass skyscraper. Like his later glass tower proposals, his wax crayon perspective envisaged an almost featureless high-rise structure, faced entirely in glass, rising above its Friedrichstrasse neighbours. In its abandonment of conventional architectural forms, and focus upon ideas of transparency rather than solidity, almost a century later the project still remains radical.

Given this architectural heritage, Mies' glass skyscraper unavoidably became the starting point for the David Chipperfield Architects' submission, with the design presented as a continuation of his tradition of crystalline towers. As with the Mies' project, the building, clad completely in glass, rejects the classical architectural standard of base, shaft, and capital in favour of a singular, sculptural tower. Enveloping this continuous form, the building's facade offers a shifting, geometric modulation of vertical and triangular surfaces, tailored in part to maximise views over the Reichstag government buildings and the Tiergarten. The glass skin of the skyscraper, and its 47 floors, are supported structurally by a central core, freeing up the surface of the building to express a striking silhouette, and to respectfully but without imitation, maintain Mies' innovative architectural legacy for Friedrichstrasse.

Project start	2001
Completion due	2001
Gross floor area	65,000 m ²
Client	Müller-Spreer & Co. Spreedreieck KG
Structural engineer	Dewhurst MacFarlane
Services engineer	IBT München, Müller-BBM



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