

In Berlin, an architect's minimalist design for luxury merges old and new

By TROY MCMULLEN Berlin — Nov 2, 2018, 6:21 PM ET



PHOTO:35BLN, a new residential building in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg.

Architect [Jochen Klein](#) has spent nearly two decades working alongside star designer Daniel Libeskind.

He led the project teams in creating the Military History Museum in Dresden and the [Jewish Museum Berlin Academy](#), the 25,000-square-foot tilted cube building located across the street from the acclaimed Jewish Museum Berlin. He also managed the design and construction of [Sapphire](#), Libeskind's first residential building in Berlin.

But when Klein took on a solo residential project in Berlin's Prenzlauer Berg district, it quickly became clear that he would be creating his own architectural footprint.

35BLN, a 43 unit luxury apartment project designed by Klein, includes a minimalist aesthetic characterized by a mix of modern industrial materials and historic authenticity.

The 19th-century structure was carefully renovated in a clean, modern design with steel girders, barrel ceilings, and preserved historic window and door arches. Lofts at the building are grouped around several courtyards while distinctive interior features include whitewashed red brickwork, concrete flooring, and fine Italian glass mosaic.

The goal, Klein says, was to develop an architectural language that focuses on the soul of a project.

“What captured my imagination right from the start was the building’s factory-like appearance – its historic brick walls, and its amazing spaciousness,” says Klein, who studied architecture in Berlin and New York before joining Libeskind. He eventually headed the firm’s Zurich office, where he built the futuristic shopping mall Westside in Bern, Switzerland. “From this arose the vision of consistently juxtaposing the historic structures with modern architecture.”



Architect Jochen Klein, designer of the 35BLN project.

Every single apartment in the project is a unique creation, Klein says.

The units range in size from roughly 45 to 284 square meters - or 500 to over 3,000 square foot. Ceiling heights soar up to 4 meters - or more than 13-foot high. Prices for the apartments start at € 6,600 to € 12,000 per square meter.

The apartments are offset with generously designed loggias, balconies and roof terraces, some with garden areas. The homes have modern floor designs with light-grey poured-concrete floors or oak parquet flooring with floorboards of up to 26 cm wide.

“We broke up the traditional floor plans and radically restructured them in order to create open and fluid spaces,” he says, referring to the clean interior design concept. “We breathed new life into the historic structures and complemented them with fresh building materials.”

The project's landscaping was created by Thilo Folkerts, a noted Berlin landscape architect who has been creating experimental garden concepts for nearly two decades.

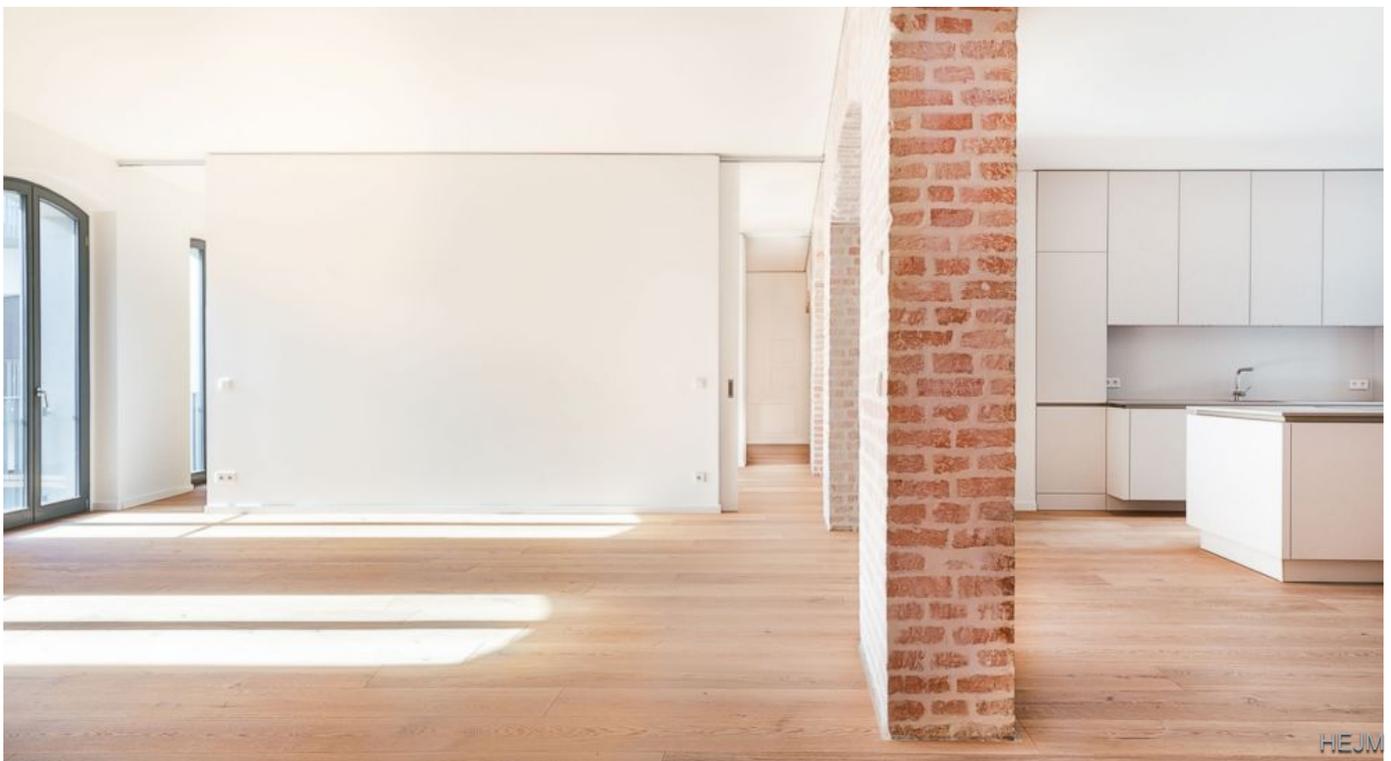


PHOTO:35BLN, a new residential building in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg.

The project sits in Prenzlauer Berg, a bustling district in the heart of the German capital that is one of the city's most charismatic residential neighborhoods, filled with cafes, historic buildings and indie boutiques.

Another unique aspect of the project is its method of sales. The apartments are only being sold once they have been completed. This means that buyers are not purchasing a concept on paper but instead a fully designed apartment.

“In the end, the old and the new come together in wondrous harmony,” adds Klein. “It’s a very special project that I’d happily move in myself.”



PHOTO:35BLN, a new residential building in Berlin-Prenzlauer Berg.

35BLN arrives as Berlin continues to be one of the most robust real estate markets in Europe.

Few places have enjoyed a more dramatic rise in investment over the past decade, with home prices seeing double-digit price growth since 2010, according to city data.

In the last year alone average residential property prices rose 20.7%, according to real-estate consultants Knight Frank, the fastest rate of all global cities it surveyed.

Today nearly every corner of the city is awash in new real estate developments, ranging from soaring luxury condominiums towers to fully renovated pre-war buildings. Many of the new properties boast prices and upscale amenities virtually unthinkable in a city that was once deemed “poor but sexy” by its mayor.

The real estate boom is being fueled, in part, by the city’s growing population coupled with a severe shortage of new homes, analysts say. International buyers from across Europe and Asia have also flooded Berlin in recent years, lifting home prices and the city’s profile as a place to invest.

Klein says his project will appeal to a maturing cadre of Berlin homebuyers now flocking to the city.

“The city is now attracting more buyers who are looking for something unique, and full of character,” he says. “This project will appeal to people looking for this special design and architecture.”