

**Making Fists:  
Public Sex and Socialist Realism**

**A Walking Kit**

**Alexanderplatz to Platz der Vereinten  
Nationen**

**First Prototype  
Compiled by Sam Dolbear**

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01.05.23/01.08.23  
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## Equipment required:

- One or more colouring pencil
- Phones or tablets with data and charge
- Phones or tablets with ability to film or video cameras
- Blindfold/sleep mask (optional)
- Clip board (if possible)

\*

*Instructions for use: Take your time, take breaks, take pictures, skip sections, make drawings, make detours, write all over this. Let me know how you get on; if you think anything could be added or taken out; if there can be any adjustments for accessibility. This is a prototype so feedback is welcome and encouraged.*

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DATE: \_\_ / \_\_ / \_\_

TIME: \_\_\_\_ : \_\_\_\_

Participants:

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First meeting point:

Outside the Besenkammer

Rathausstraße 1, Berlin, Deutschland, 10178

Some facts:

- It's a gay bar!
- Opened in 1964 as a Mocca-Bar ('mocha bar').
- Early meeting place for gays in the GDR.
- 20 square metres inside.
- TINY!

*I've always been too scared to go in. If you feel able to, let me know how it goes!!*

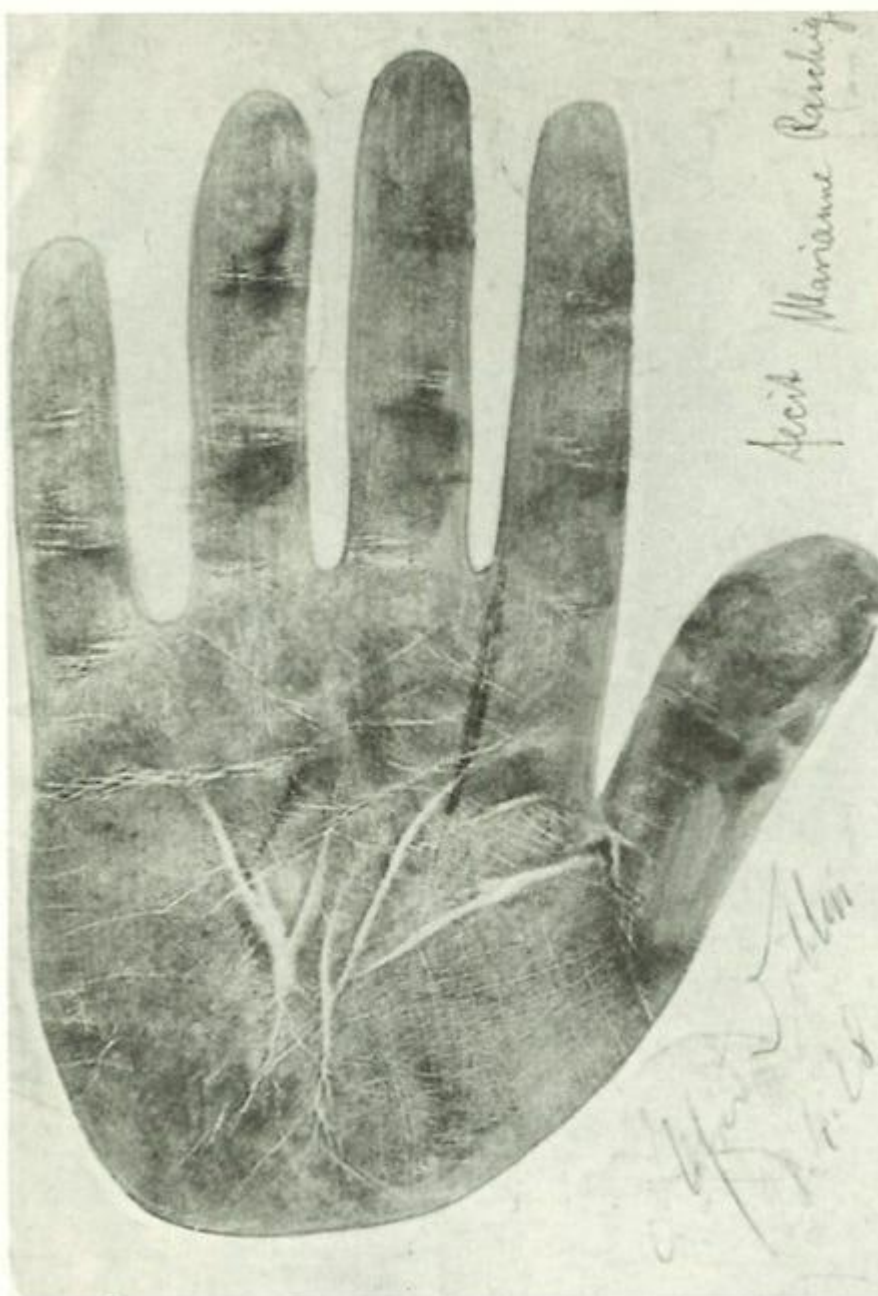
You can also start the walk around the corner, at the Brunnen der Völkerfreundschaft ('fountain of friendship of peoples').

*As you walk to the fountain, look for marks or lines on the pavements.*

When next to the fountain, read the following text aloud. Take it in turns to read, make audio recordings, stop to discuss and look at the images (from <https://raeblodmas.substack.com>)



Alfred Döblin's palm was printed and read by Marianne Raschig, the celebrity palmist who also took Magnus Hirschfeld's [hand](#). Raschig's reading was published in the promotional book *Alfred Döblin: In Books-At Home-On the Street* (1928), whose cover was done by Sasha Stone in the same year that he designed Walter Benjamin's *One Way Street*. The book contains a bizarre array of stats: everything from his height, his weight, his number of wisdom teeth, his inhalation capacity, the character of his handshake, even his mucus levels. The book also contains a hand-writing analysis by the graphologist Dr. Max Pulver, who comments on his temperament, character, personality, profession and health. (Pulver published also on handwriting and its relation to forensics/crime).



Marianne Raschig says Döblin's hand is delicate with nervous fingers. She says the lines on his hand are unusual but show harmony and clarity. She says he has red nails and she asks him to let them grow. She asks him about his childhood. She says much more. Döblin comments only "Sicher ist mir nur, daß es die linke Hand ist" [I am sure only that it is my left hand]. To me the hand looks like a cut out.

2

In 1993 Daniel Libeskind used this image of Alfred Döblin's handprint as the basis for his proposal for the transformation of Alexanderplatz. "If you want to know what Alexanderplatz looks like, look at my left hand", Libeskind mis-quotes or mis-elaborates Döblin in this lecture of 1999 at the Architectural Association: In 1993 Daniel Libeskind used this image of Alfred Döblin's handprint as the basis for his proposal for the transformation of Alexanderplatz. "If you want to know what Alexanderplatz looks like, look at my left hand", Libeskind mis-quotes or mis-elaborates Döblin in this lecture of 1999 at the Architectural Association:

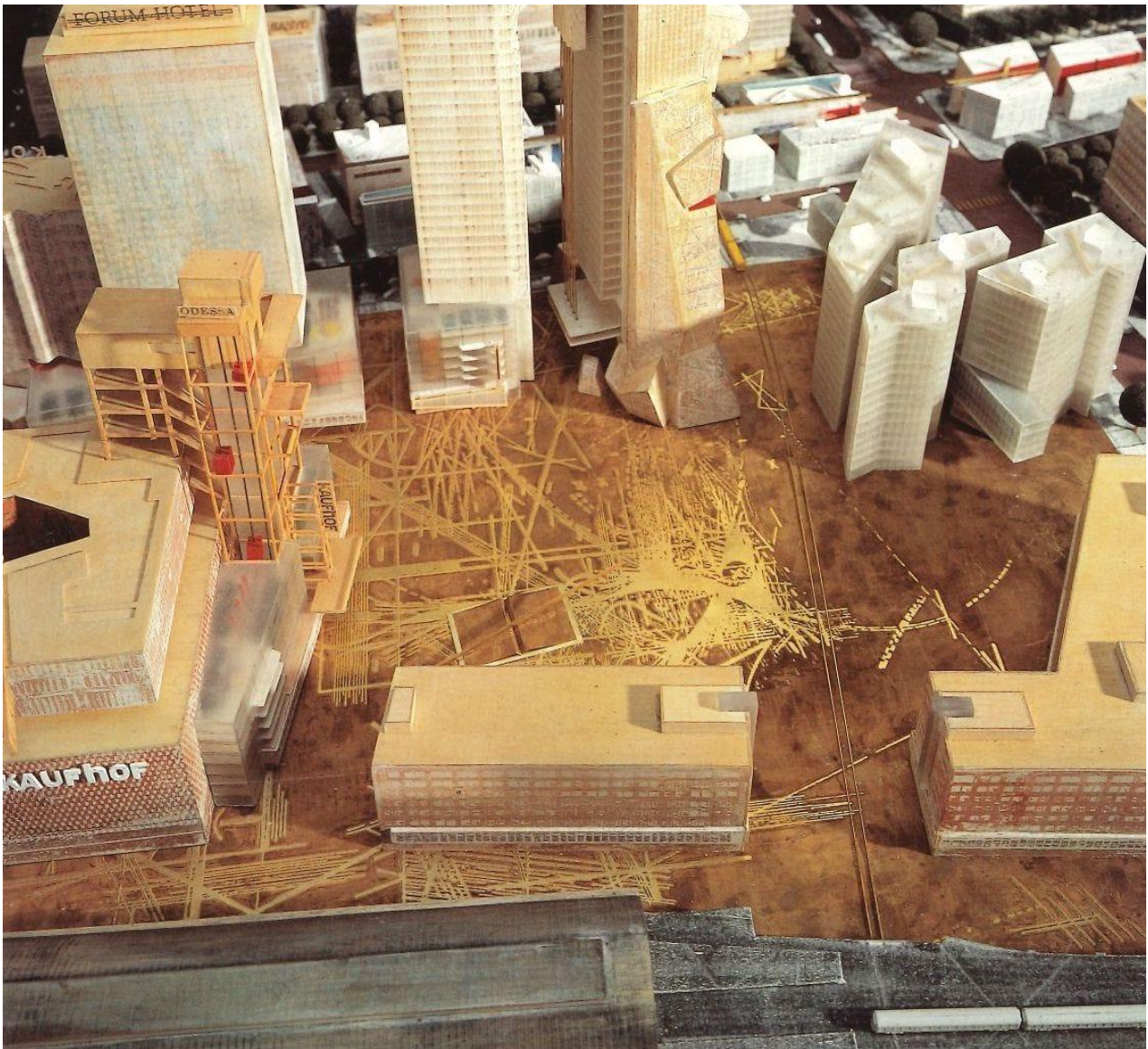




In the proposal Libeskind writes: Alexanderplatz is the left hand of Berlin, it does not know what the right hand is doing, but it reacts with both capability and sensitivity. “The purpose of our project is to read the future of Alexanderplatz from the palm of its hand [...] to secure a future for it.” These lines on Döblin’s hand enter Libeskind’s vast architectural model, as lines of traffic and scrapes on the pavements.







Libeskind's proposal was eventually rejected by the jury. They said it did not reconfigure the DDR planning structure enough. They said the chaos degenerates into a Disneyland. There was a problem also with car parks. Libeskind's frustration is evident in the above lecture.

2

Döblin also published under the name "Linke Poot", a dialectical variation of "Linke Pfote" [Left Paw]. In this [inscription poem](#) to Elsa Franke, dated 30 May 1923, he writes: "We have many souls, and one shall know the other. Let thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth."



Back to tour | Some things about the fountain:

1. It was designed by Walter Womacka between 1969–70. Womacka also did the mosaic frieze *Our Life* on the Haus des Lehrers (top) on the other side of Alexanderplatz; as well as a mural at the now-dismantled Palast der Republik entitled *When Communists Dream* (bottom).

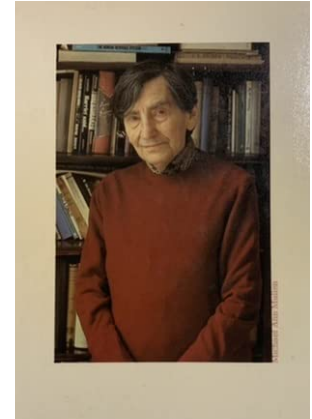


2. *Völkerfreundschaft* (friendship of the peoples) has both a Marxist and a Stalinist origin; as an attempt to overcome allegiance based solely on nationhood.
3. The fountain was known as the 'Nuttenbrosche' ('whore's brooch'), as it came to represent (and was historically) the centre of area in the GDR used for sex work, but also a point of encounter and meeting.<sup>1</sup>

NEXT ↴

<sup>1</sup> See: Uta Falck, *VEB Bordell – Geschichte der Prostitution in der DDR*, 1998.

Enter CHARLOTTE WOLFF: a doctor, later hand reader, later sexologist, who, in the late 1920s, worked with sex workers on Alexanderplatz. In her memoir, *Hindsight* (1980), she recalls returning to Berlin in 1979, when she went to a lesbian and feminist social centre at Mariannenstraße 34 in Kreuzberg where the L.74 group met (L. for lesbian; 74 for its year of foundation).



Wolff writes that the women she met:

↳

wanted to know about my lesbian experiences, the atmosphere in the night clubs, dance palaces and other meeting places of the twenties.



*Die Freundin* had obviously been an ‘illegitimate child’ which did not dare to show its face openly. The lesbian world which it depicts had little in common with the homosexual women I knew and the places I frequented. Its readers must have been of a different class who loved, wine and danced in a different world. They came together every week in localities on the Alexander Platz and the surrounding district where the poorer people lived. The following advertisement in *Die Freundin* illustrates better than any second-hand description the way those lesbians enjoyed themselves: ‘Sonnabend, 30 Juli, 1927. Nur Damen treffen sich jeden Mittwoch und Sonnabend im ALEXANDER-PALAIS. ‘Ein Sommernachtstraum’. (Only ladies meet each Wednesday and Saturday at Alexander Palace. ‘A Summer Night’s Dream’.)

I want to try and find the advert but haven’t quite had time yet.

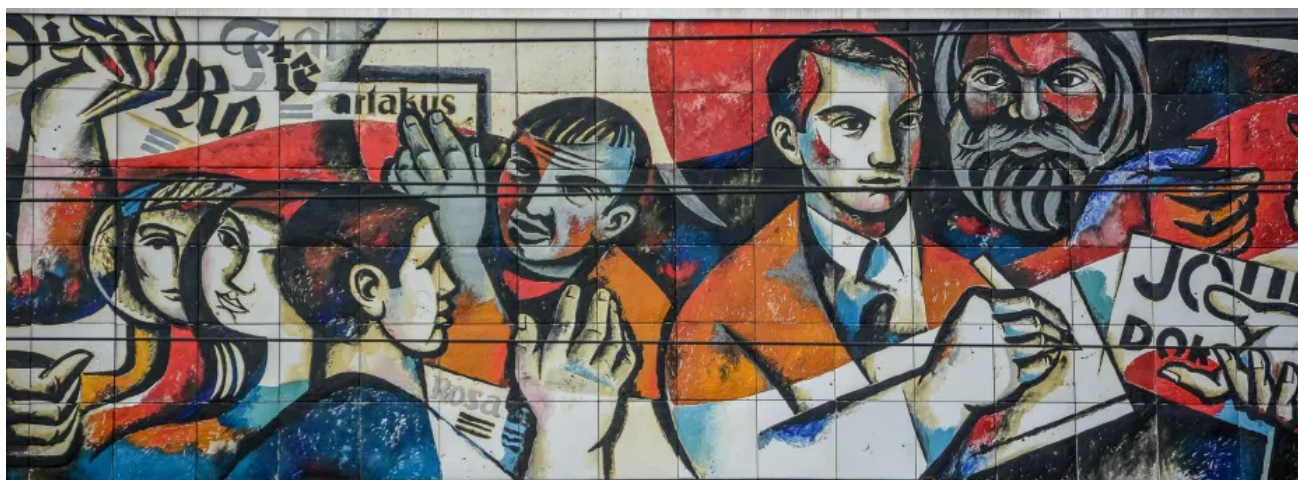
↳



After reading, enter your maps app on your phone:

Bauarbeiter-Skulptur, Karl-Liebknecht-Str. 31, 10178 Berlin

Note the recently revealed mural on the old Press Café on your left hand side (below), done by Willi Neubert and entitled 'Die Presse als Organisator' (The Press as Organiser). There are hands on the mural and accounts of cruising in toilets [citation needed].



As you get close to the Bauarbeiter-Skulptur statue, open your phone and begin to record a video. Continue to record as you approach. **Your task:** to get the statue to hold something (a building, a thing) in its right hand. Send the video to me when done.

*turn the page after completing the task.....*

What did the construction worker come to hold?

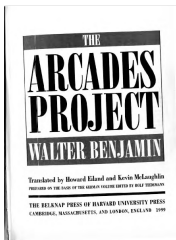


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The most common answer (at least according to googlemaps) is the ball of the TV Tower, which was completed in 1969, one year after the Bauarbeiter-Skulptur was erected. My theory: The construction worker comes to hold a piece of architecture constructed by them. As per the Brecht's quote attached to a building not so far away: 'Peace in our land/ Peace in our city/ That it will house/ Those who built it'.<sup>2</sup> But also something more cosmic? ☺



Fourier's conception of the propagation of the phalansteries through "explosions" may be compared to two articles of my "politics": the idea of revolution as an innervation of the technical organs of the collective (analogy with the child who learns to grasp by trying to get hold of the moon), and the idea of the "cracking open of natural teleology." <See W8a,5 and X1a,2.> [W7,4]

One more task:

On the diagram on the next page trace the lines of the worker's hand (or your own). Submit it to me and I'll send back a reading of the hand according to a system of proletarian palmistry that I've tried to invent.

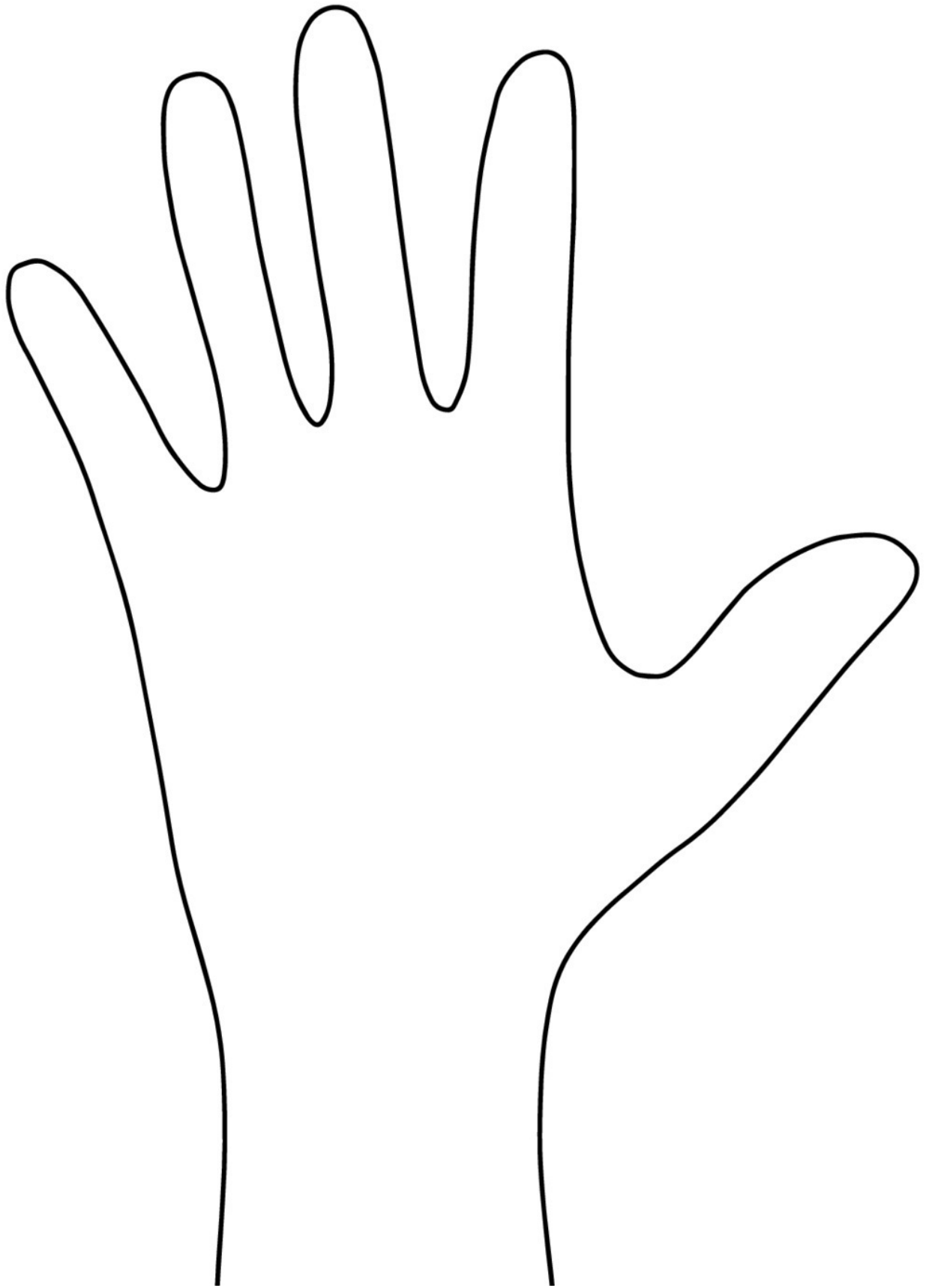


[something also here on the size of hands in socialist realism]

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<sup>2</sup> The location is the Hochhaus an der Weberwiese. The German is on the wall of AGIT as well as the Hochhaus: Friede in unserem Lande!/ Friede in unserer Stadt!/ Daß sie den gut behause/ Der sie gebauet hat.





Next your task is to walk to a toilet on one of the corners of Senefelderplatz. On your way...



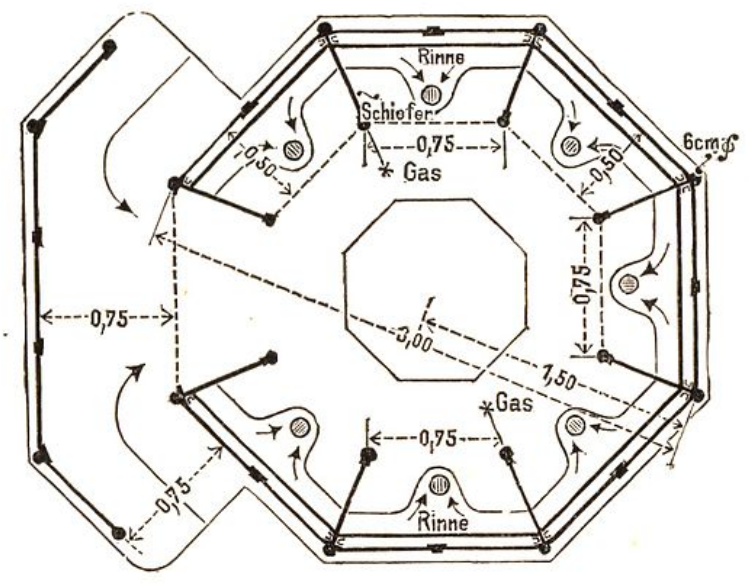
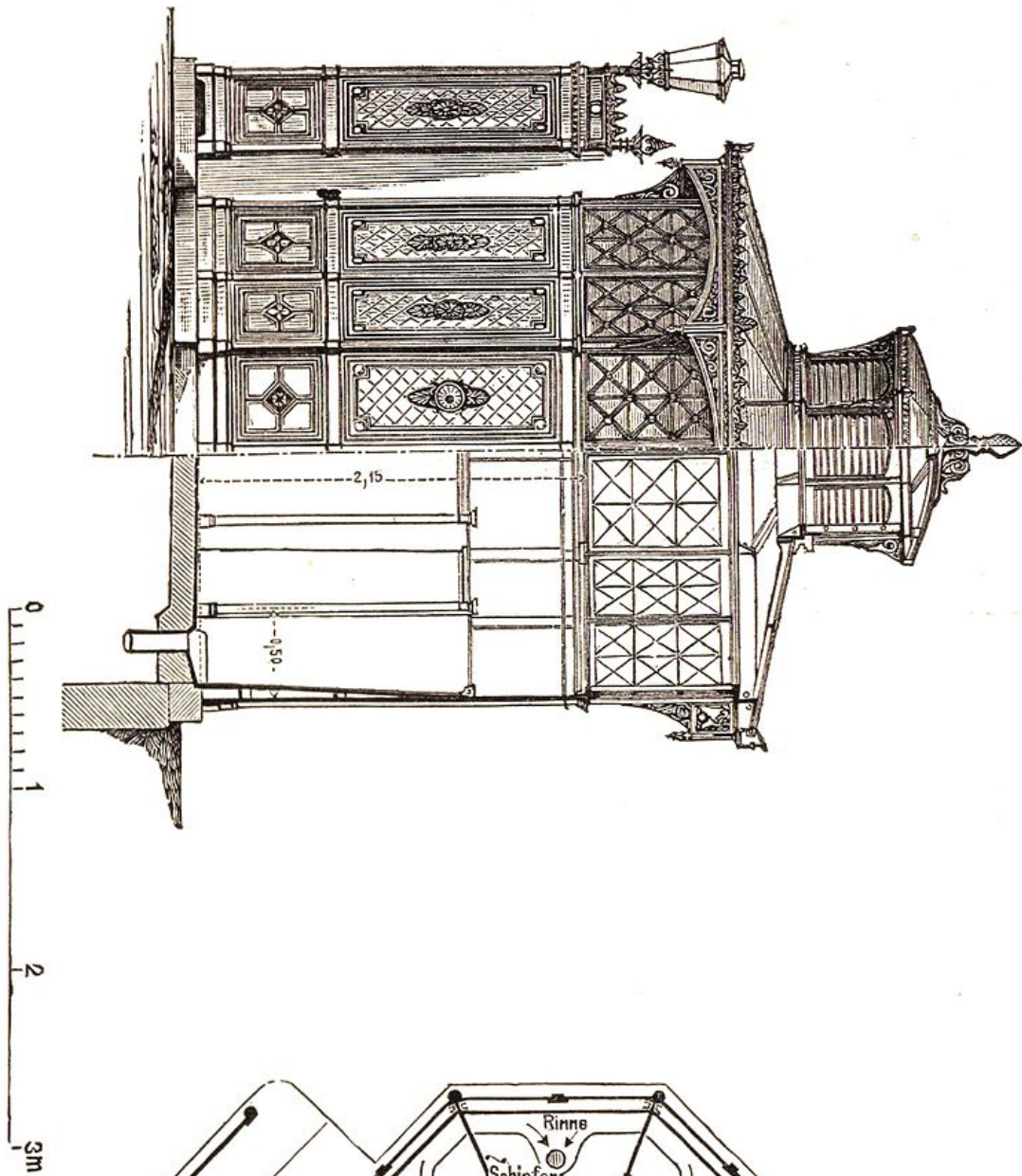
...pass by Rolf Biebl's 1998 statue of Rosa Luxemburg (falsely listed as Clara Zetkin on googlemaps), at the back of the *junge Welt* (newspaper) building on Linienstraße 15. The statue was previously outside the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation on the Straße der Pariser Kommune where it was set up on 28 April 2021, Worker's Memorial Day – an international day of remembrance and action for workers killed, disabled, injured, or made unwell by waged labour.



As you walk to Senefelderplatz listen to this recording of Chris Chitty's essay 'Patenting The Pissoir: Queer Bodies and Proprietary Technologies' (2017), which you can find via [blindfoldjournal.com](http://blindfoldjournal.com).



On Senefelderplatz itself you might also pass the statue of Alois Senefelder (1771–1834), who is credited with the invention of lithography. Look out for his name, written in a mirror.



This pissoir is nicknamed a Café Achteck ('Achteck' being an Octagon, i.e. a thing with eight [<sup>acht</sup>] corners [<sup>ecken</sup>]). It was designed in cast iron by Carl Theodor Rospatt in 1878. In 1920 there were around 142 in Berlin, around 40 of which remain (more recently replaced by a grey equivalent). What is the construction of public sex in these urinals? How does this have a class dimension in Chitty's essay and beyond discuss if you like...

At  
This  
Point  
I  
Want  
To  
Document  
Some  
Of  
The  
Now-  
Closed  
Gay  
Bars  
Around  
Here  
But  
I  
Haven't  
Been  
Able  
To  
Write  
Them  
Up  
For  
This  
Iteration  
Of  
The  
Walk.

From here walk ↴

down Kollwitzstraße to Kollwitzplatz, ↴

and look for large statue of Käthe Kollwitz by the playground ↴





Once you enter the fairy tale park, walk around and find a bench. Here you can watch this scene from *Coming Out* (dir. Heiner Carow, 1989), a film that premiered on the night the wall came down on 9 November 1989 at the Kino International (Karl Marx Allee 33), making it the first and the last official gay film to come out in the GDR. The scene shows the film's protagonist, a school teacher Philipp Klarmann (played by Matthias Freihof), picking up someone in the fairytale park, perhaps on the bench you might find, before going back to their apartment to have sex. (You can also watch it all at home with the same link.)



<https://youtu.be/7iFne8qE8MU?t=5269>

I want to insert something here on the debates in the GDR as to whether fairytales could be incorporated into the political aesthetics of the state; if their feudal or bourgeois origins could be overcome; if there were any gay ones or ones that centred hands.



Action: Try to make up a gay-communist fairy tale. Either one person could do it all, or each person could take a blank to fill in (like a round):

Once upon a time, there was a \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_ who

\_\_\_\_\_.

They \_\_\_\_\_, pretending to\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_.

After\_\_\_\_\_ they\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

After the\_\_\_\_\_

the \_\_\_\_\_ fisted\_\_\_\_\_.

\_\_\_\_\_the statue\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

After

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

And they all \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

THE END ↴

Now walk along the park towards the Spanienkämpfer ('The Spanish Fighter'). On the right you will pass some animal statues. I wondered if there's a discussion about whether and which animals have hands?

On the left you will see various wooded areas which are historically and currently cruising areas.

According to awesomeberlin.net [other sources available]:  
'Outdoorsy types will find Volkspark Friedrichshain's cruising area quite interesting. For some action, go behind the Spanienkämpfer-Denkmal (the memorial for the victims of the Spanish Civil War), on Friedenstrasse.'



### Optional task:

Blindfold one of your party. Carefully guide them to the large freeze in front of the Spanish Fighter. Get them to feel the freeze and list words of things they think of or are able to identify. You can also do this without the blindfold. Write down what you have identified or discussed:




The relief, <sup>According to Susanne Kähler</sup>, designed by Siegfried Krepp, depicts three events in one composition: try to identify them if you can

1. The Spanish resistance to the insurgent fascist generals in July 1936;
2. The attack of the German Nazi air force against the Spanish Republic in August 1936;
3. The reaction of international solidarity until the formation of the international Brigades in October 1936.



*Something here about how hands (or fists) becomes crowds or multitudes, also found on the relief of the Hochschule Hanns Eisler - an optional visit at the end*

At this point move to look at the The main Spanienkämpfer figure who <sup>according to Susanne Kähler</sup> was produced by the sculptor Fritz Cremer, who also designed the Revolt of the Prisoners ("Revolte der Gefangenen") sculpture at Buchenwald. Here the soldier is depicted wearing a <sup>complete</sup> the sentences \_\_\_\_\_ and a \_\_\_\_\_. The figure seems to be throwing himself up, perhaps out of a trench. His left leg and arm are both stretched in a line. His left hand carries a sword, which points \_\_\_\_\_. His right arm is bent, the fist clenched. His hands are \_\_\_\_\_. His right knee carries the weight of his entire body. The other leg hangs in the air. His facial expression is \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. This is a statue of the \_\_\_\_\_ of history.



*Is such a posture possible? (try it if you want)*



At this point you are welcome to either walk around Volkspark Friedrichshain, or else head to the final stop.

The things to note in in the park are:

a mysterious and derelict club listed as 'Gay club BERLIN' on the corner of Danziger Straße and Landsberger Allee;

the hill in the middle made from the rubble of two anti-aircraft towers built in 1941 and exploded in 1946;

other cruising stops;

the statue of the mother and child in the Duftgarten (Fragrance Garden);

the place of athletics and the aesthetic body within GDR aesthetics and politics;

the 1972 Denkmal des polnischen Soldaten und deutschen Antifaschisten ('Pomnik żołnierza polskiego i niemieckiego antyfaszysty', 'Memorial to Polish Soldiers and German Anti-Fascists') now used largely as a skatepark.



At this point make your way to the **final stop**

Platz der Vereinten Nationen ('United Nations Square')

The task is to locate the place where this Lenin statue once stood:



Once found, rest, ...

... and read this history: ↴

This square was, between 1950–1992, called Leninplatz (Lenin Square).

The Lenin statue was designed by Nikolai Tomsy and inaugurated on 19 April 1970 to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of Lenin's birth.

It was dismantled between November 1991 and February 1992 and buried (in the ground!) on the outskirts of Berlin.

In 2015 only Lenin's head was dug up and put on display in a museum in Spandau.

Today only one statue of Lenin remains in Berlin, in a carpark of a logistics company (zapf umzüge AG) in Neukölln, which you can visit.



To finish:

Owen Hatherley, in his book *Landscapes of Communism* (2015), creates a taxonomy of Lenins, a kind of 'life of Jesus', as he found them in the Russian city of Nizhny Novgorod. There's baby Lenin on a plaque, youthfully insurgent Lenin in the form of a statue, fatherly leader Lenin as another statue.

What  
type  
of  
Lenin  
was  
this  
?



We other Lenins to this taxonomy: mother Lenin, auntie Lenin, even gay Lenin.

According to Yevgeniy Fiks, in his book of cruising sites *Moscow* (2013):

**M**uch later, in the 1970s and '80s, the statue of Karl Marx on Sverdlov Square—a well-known cruising site—became known in queer circles as the “Director of the Pleshka.” Subsequently,



Sverdlov Square (Площадь Свердлова), mid 1930s - 1980s

statues of Lenin in the centers of many provincial Russian cities were referred to in gay parlance as “Aunt Lena” (Тётя Лена); it was customary to arrange dates by saying, “let’s meet at Aunt Lena’s.”

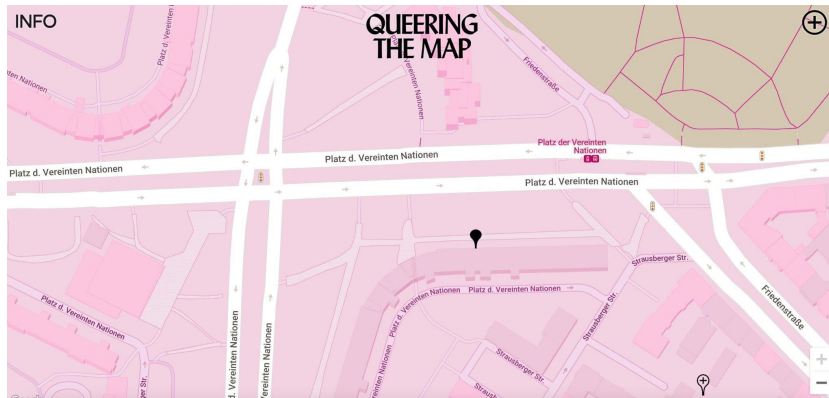
The queer subculture of Soviet urban centers, as in any large city, appropriated existing environments. Cruising sites sprang up in convenient central locations and near public transportation, spaces heavily contaminated by official symbols of state ideology. Gay subculture appropriated these symbols of Communism by “adopting” them. Thus, numerous Marxes and Lenins in Soviet cities became “Aunt Lenas” and “Directors of Pleshkas.” This process of renaming was a gesture that removed their ideological pathos: the feminization of “founding father” and revolutionary hero Lenin resulted in an image of his androgyny; the chief ideologist Marx became an old crone “in charge” of a gay cruising site.

Throughout the Soviet experience, queer Muscovite subjects were reclaiming sites of the Revolution—a revolution that had betrayed its promised of a dignified existence for them. In the atmosphere of six decades of silence and repression, this was a gesture of resistance and revenge for that betrayal. Homosexual activity in front of the monument to Karl Marx on Sverdlov Square, or in the public toilets of the nearby Lenin Museum, violently tore the fabric of a stagnant political culture. These expressions of queer sexuality effectively subverted the USSR’s claims of having achieved socialism.



I checked to see if anyone had recorded a sexual encounter by this disappeared Lenin on the website [Queering the Map](#).

There's only one pin left nearby:



I clicked on it to reveal a simply entry:



What happened at this address isn't clear – it haunts the map, as Lenin haunts this square. Let's keep haunting? (or another ending...)

THE END

# Thank you for taking part!!!!!!

I'd love to hear how you got on and any thoughts

From here, there are a number of options  
of things you could go to:



Cocktail at Salon Babette (not always open) opposite Kino International on Karl-Marx-Allee



Cocktail at Kaffee & Tee further up Karl-Marx-Allee on Frankfurter Tor (it's nice if you can sit outside)



Coffee and cake at Cafe Sibylle on Karl-Marx-Allee (there's Stalin's ear inside??)



Walk to the Hochschule Hanns Eisler to see the multitudes as fists freeze

Text me if you want any other recommendations

Or just to send me any pictures

00 49 163 9175375

Or tell me what you got up to/anything else:



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## Credits:

Texts compiled by Sam Dolbear with others.

### Preliminary walks with

Phoebe Blatton, Hannah Gregory, Christina Demetriou (15.01.23)

Hussein Mitha, Hannah Proctor (10.04.23)

Rosemary Grennan (25.04.23)

Additional thanks and dedication to: D. Mortimer, Lizzie Homersham, Amelia Groom, Esther Leslie, Claudia Peppel, Rosen Eveleigh, Yevgeniy Fiks.