



Architecture

Brandenburg Gate

Brandenburger Tor, Berlin, Germany

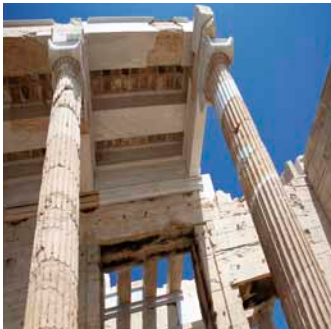




The Brandenburg Gate

The Brandenburg Gate (in German: Brandenburger Tor) is one of Berlin's most important monuments—an architectural landmark and historical symbol all in one. It has been at the heart of German and European history for over two hundred years.

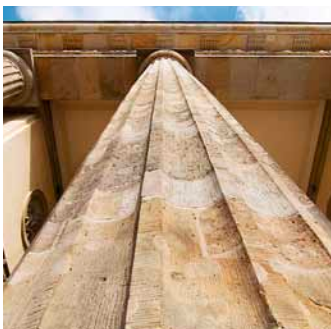
Commissioned by King Frederick William II of Prussia as a sign of peace, it was built as the grandest of a series of 18 city gates through which



Propylaea, entry hall of the Acropolis

Berlin was once entered. The entire construction and ornamentation of the Gate reflected its extraordinary importance as the monumental entry to Unter den Linden, the renowned boulevard of linden trees, which formerly led directly to the city palace of the Prussian monarchs.

The Gate was constructed between 1788 and 1791 according to the designs of its architect, Carl Gotthard Langhans. His inspiration for the building came from the Propylaea in Athens, the monumental entry hall of the Acropolis. Just as the Propylaea led to a shrine of the ancient world, the Brandenburg Gate was to represent the access to the most important city of the Prussian kingdom. With its direct reference to antiquity, the gate founded the Classic age of architecture in Berlin, an epoch that soon led the city to be called "Athens of the Spree" (in German: Spreeathen), after the river that runs through it.



The Gate is built in sandstone

Twelve columns, six to each side



The Gate itself is built in sandstone and consists of twelve Doric columns, six to each side, forming five passageways. Citizens originally were allowed to use only the outermost two, the central passageway being reserved for Prussian royalty and visiting foreign dignitaries.



Atop the gate is the Quadriga, a chariot drawn by four horses driven by Victoria, the Roman goddess of victory. It was created by Johann Gotfried Schadow, the

most important sculptor in Berlin during this period. The relief on the pedestal portrays Victoria together with a number of attendant personified virtues such as friendship and statesmanship. Along with symbols of arts and sciences, these were seen as vital components ensuring the city would bloom in times of peace. Down in the passageways, reliefs depicting the exploits of Hercules alluded to the time of the War and the subsequent period of reconstruction, during which time King Frederick William II had made Prussia into a true European power.



Though the Brandenburg Gate has remained essentially unchanged since its completion, it has had a central role in many of Europe's most monumental historical events. In 1806, Napoleon marched triumphantly into Berlin and carried the Quadriga away with him to Paris as a spoil of war. After Napoleon's defeat in 1814 and the Prussian occupation of Paris, the Quadriga was restored to Berlin and Victoria's wreath of oak leaves was supplemented with a new symbol of Prussian power, the Iron Cross. In 1933 the National Socialists marched through the gate in a martial torch parade, introducing the darkest chapter of German history, ultimately leaving the city in ruins and Germany divided.

When Berlin was partitioned after World War II, the center of the city fell into the Soviet sector, which met the British sector at the Brandenburg Gate. After a series of demonstrations against the building of the Berlin Wall, the Soviets closed the Brandenburg Gate on August 14th, 1961. It remained closed until December 22nd, 1989, when the wall fell and East and West Berlin were unified once again.

Throughout this turbulent period of history, the Brandenburg Gate had fallen into general disrepair. In 2000, the Berlin Monument Conservation Foundation (in German: Stiftung Denkmalschutz Berlin) began a full restoration of the Brandenburg Gate. It opened to the public again two years and six million US dollars later on October 3rd, 2002, the twelfth anniversary of German Reunification.

Today, the Brandenburg Gate is regarded as one of Europe's most famous landmarks.

Carl Gotthard Langhans (December 15, 1732–October 1, 1808) was born in Landeshut, Silesia (now in Poland). He was not originally educated as an architect. Instead he studied law from 1753 to 1757 and then mathematics and languages. He taught himself architecture using the antique texts of the Roman architecture theorist Vitruvius.

His first draft of "Zum Schiffelein Christi" for the Protestant Church in 1764 in Groß-Glogau earned him both his first recognition as an architect and an appointment as building inspector for the Count of Hatzfeld, whose war-ravaged palace he had rebuilt to his own design between 1766 and 1774. Through the intervention of the Count of Hatzfeld, Langhans also became known at the royal court in Berlin, and this would eventually lead to arguably his greatest work: the Brandenburg Gate. He died at Grüneiche near Breslau (now in Poland) in 1808.



Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-M10 15-327.
Photo: Donath, Otto / April 1950

Bundesarchiv, Bild 183-S89875.
Photo: Quaschinsky, Hans-Gunter / November 1949

Facts about Brandenburg Gate

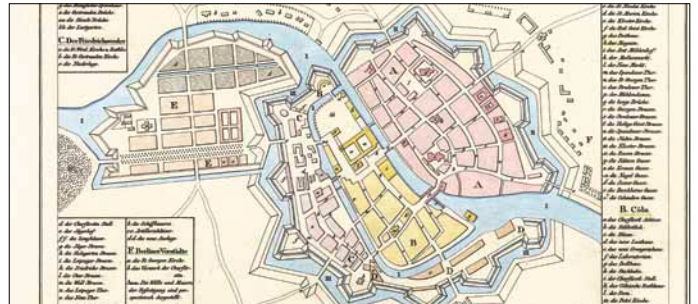
Location:..... Berlin, Germany
 Architect: Carl Gotthard Langhans
 Architectural style: Classicism
 Materials:..... Sandstone
 Date of construction: From 1788 to 1791



At the base of Brandenburg Gate lies Pariser Platz, a popular city square, which was once home to embassies, the houses of noblemen and grand hotels. At the end of World War II, the Gate was one of the few structures in the square left standing.



Shortly after the Thirty Years' War, and a century before the Brandenburg Gate was constructed, Berlin was a small walled city within a star fort with several named gates: Spandauer Thor, St. Georgen Thor, Stralower Thor, Cöpenicker.

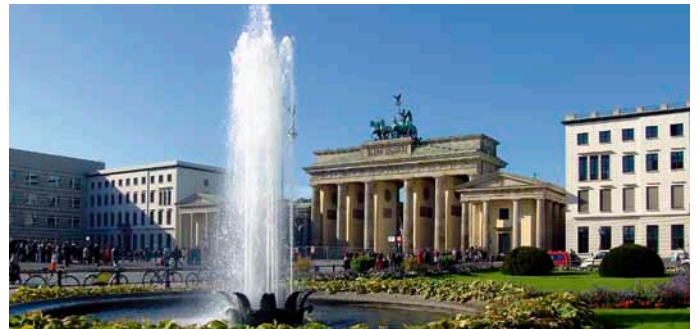


On June 12, 1987, U.S. President Ronald Reagan spoke to West Berliners at the Brandenburg Gate, and called for his Soviet counterpart to "Come here to this gate! Mr. Gorbachev, open this gate!"



The 12 Doric columns, six on each side of the Gate, support the gate's 11 meters (36-foot) long transverse beam.

A complete refurbishment of the Gate was carried out in 2000, and took two years to complete at a cost of six million US dollars.



One of the most famous speeches given in front of the Brandenburg Gate was that of US President John F. Kennedy in 1963, where he said the famous words "Ich bin ein Berliner".

In the 1980s, decrying the existence of two German states, West Berlin mayor Richard von Weizsäcker said: "The German question is open as long as the Brandenburg Gate is closed."



A Word from the Artist

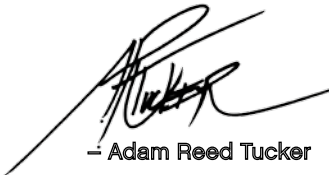
As an Architectural Artist my desire is to capture the essence of a particular architectural landmark into its pure sculptural form. I first and foremost do not view my models as literal replicas, but rather my own artistic interpretations through the use of LEGO® bricks as a medium. The LEGO brick is not initially thought of as a material typically used in creating art or used as an artist's medium. I quickly discovered the LEGO brick was lending itself as naturally to my applications as paint to a painter or metal to a blacksmith. As I explore how to capture these buildings with the basic shapes of the bricks and plates, I find the possibilities and challenges they offer almost magical.

21011 Brandenburg Gate

Following the parameters found among the landmark series it was important to maintain a souvenir scaled model. This historical monument contains architectural styling and motifs difficult to accurately replicate at a smaller size. For instance, the colonnades are made using railings scaled to be roughly 3 feet high, but here clearly take on the feel of 20 foot tall columns.

Another interesting detail attributed to achieving a small scale is how to effectively represent the monument's sculpture of the Quadriga, a four-horsed chariot driven by Victoria, the winged goddess of victory, found crowning the top of the gate. This very distinctive feature was recreated using "greebles"—the use of unintended parts to recreate another object in an abstract way.

While this model is seemingly a straightforward build, achieving the ½ stud width cantilever found highlighting the parameter where the upper cornice meets the frieze seemed tricky. The technique used turned out to be a simple solution using 1x1 round plates offset between 4 full studs and 2x2 tiles above completing the proportionally correct ½ stud overhang.



— Adam Reed Tucker

The “Scale Model” line – LEGO® Architecture in the 1960s

The history of current LEGO® Architecture series can be traced back to the beginning of the 1960s when the LEGO brick's popularity was still steadily increasing. Godtfred Kirk Christiansen, the then owner of the company, began looking for ways to further expand the LEGO system, and asked his designers to come up with a set of new components that would add a new dimension to LEGO building.

Their answer was as simple as it was revolutionary: five elements that matched the existing bricks, but were only one third the height. These new building “plates” made it possible to construct more detailed models than before.

This greater LEGO flexibility seemed to match the spirit of the age; where modernist architects were redefining how houses looked, and people were taking an active interest in the design of their dream home. It was from these trends that the LEGO “Scale Model” line was born in early 1962.

The name itself was a direct link to the way architects and engineers worked, and it was hoped that they and others would build their projects “to scale” in LEGO elements. As with LEGO Architecture today, the original sets were designed to be different from the normal brightly colored LEGO boxes, and also included *An Architectural Book* for inspiration.

Though the five elements remain an integral part of the LEGO building system today, the “Scale Model” was phased out in 1965 –it would be over 40 years before its principles would be revived in the LEGO Architecture series we know today.

