



Berlin. redefined

Thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the city remains a magnet for the creative class.
AIR chats to three tastemakers shaping Berlin's food, fashion and art scenes

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The designer: Maximilian Mogg

Classic Savile Row style in the edgy German capital may seem like an unlikely pairing, but it makes perfect sense to Maximilian Mogg. “It is unusual,” he concedes, “yet it is only possible in Berlin, because Berlin is a city that gives you a lot of freedom; people here really don’t give a damn.”

Originally from Koblenz, a small city between Frankfurt and Cologne, the 27-year-old designer and cutter recounts the moment he knew Berlin was the right place to pursue his passion for tailoring. “I was walking along, wearing a three-piece suit and tie, next to a guy wearing a full-on leather costume and nose ring, and nobody turned their head,” he says.

After founding his eponymous made-to-measure label four years ago, a buyer from Mr Porter spotted Mogg’s style on Instagram. In June, he unveiled his first ready-to-wear eveningwear collection for the luxury online retailer, featuring tuxedo jackets and trousers in classic black and midnight blue, paired with slim-fit shirts in pastel hues. A second collection launches this month – quite a coup for a young German designer breaking into the traditional world of English tailoring.

“We do 90 per cent double-breasted and solely use British fabrics, so we are fortunate that Mr Porter gives me free rein,” Mogg says. The latest collection reflects the house style:

shoulders are strongly padded and lapels are broad, while skirts (the area below the bottom button) are cut slightly wider to slim the waist.

Alongside chalk-stripe flannel suits and subtle Prince of Wales check, a black-and-white chequerboard dinner jacket injects some raffish charm. “Normally our stuff is very conservative, but we try to convey a bit of humour – don’t take yourself too seriously, it’s just clothes,” he says.

The majority of Mogg’s customers are between 25 and 35, and the designer even counts some Brits among his international clientele. “It’s a good feeling,” he admits. “But what makes me happy is young people are enthusiastic about suits – but then again, maybe they always have been because they know so much. I am always amazed; they really do their homework,” he says.

Mogg, meanwhile, has been honing his sartorial style since he was 15, when he first began buying vintage Savile Row suits and altering them to suit his slim frame. “I didn’t find any ready-to-wear suits that fit me because of my long arms. Then I looked upon the English suits and somehow this really made sense to me,” he says. “With the English silhouette, you can create a sculpture around the body.”

At 18, he headed to London to learn Savile Row’s fabled traditions, but

soon discovered that apprenticeships were scarce. After studying business, he flirted with a career in private banking and marketing, before moving to Berlin in 2015 to work for a start-up incubator. But the lure of tailoring proved too strong.

Initially working from his apartment in the Neukölln neighbourhood, Mogg interned at Edward Sexton, the maverick tailor who shook up the Row in the Sixties, before opening a boutique last year in Berlin’s leafy Charlottenburg district. He hopes to launch a bespoke service next spring. “We have the advantage and the disadvantage of not being in London. In London, you have many tailors, each with a specific house style. Here in Berlin, if you want a very British-looking suit, you can probably only come to me,” he says.

Not content with challenging Berlin’s casual dress codes, the charismatic designer is spearheading a modern dandy movement in the city. A network of online contributors offer style advice, curate cocktail-hour playlists and create a comic strip based on the adventures of the dashing Mr Lush, while his Instagram oozes old-school glamour – think posing by a pool table in a pinstripe suit, or peering over *Playboy* wearing a vintage top hat. “It’s more than a suit – it’s a lifestyle,” he says.

maximilianmogg.de



The collector: Karen Boros

Few buildings encapsulate Berlin's tumultuous 20th-century history quite like the bullet-pocked, concrete hulk in the central Mitte district that houses the Boros Collection of contemporary art. Built in 1942 as an air-raid shelter, it was later used by the Red Army as a prisoner of war camp, then by the East German government to store tropical fruit imported from communist comrades in Cuba. After the fall of the Wall, the 'Banana Bunker', as it was known to locals, became a techno club famed for its hedonistic parties.

In 2003, art historian Karen Boros and her husband, media entrepreneur Christian, bought the bunker and spent four years renovating it. Keen to share their collection with the public, the couple also relished the opportunity to transform a relic from the darkest period of German history into a space that champions young artists and freedom of thought. "The challenge is to find a balance and communication between the history of the walls and the works of young artists who approach topics of their time," says Boros.

Since 2008, the idiosyncratic space has displayed works from the couple's extensive collection. The first two exhibitions attracted 320,000 guests; the current edition, on show until 2021, features works by 19 artists, including Martin Boyce, Andreas Eriksson and Guan Xiao. Restricted to a dozen people at a time, guided tours by appointment sell out weeks in advance.

The influential collectors focus on young emerging artists and their most recent works. "We like to commit ourselves to acquire more than just one work. It is a bit like having a relationship and you get to know each other more in-depth," she says. They are often drawn to different artists, then discuss and argue their points to reach a decision. "Some works we choose with respect to the possibilities in the space, but there are not so many limitations given by the bunker," says Boros.

As a child growing up in Remscheid in the former West Germany, Boros recalls being intrigued by a

reproduction of Johannes Vermeer's 1657 masterpiece, *Girl Reading a Letter at an Open Window*, at her grandparent's house. "It could trigger all sorts of feelings and ideas, which I realised later, is the essence of art," she says. "Until I was in my mid-thirties, I never thought of becoming an art collector. It kind of emerged from working in a gallery and wanting to live with art."

In 1998, Boros was representing a Cologne gallery at Art Basel when she met her future husband. Born in Poland, he moved to West Germany with his family as a child to flee communism, and grew up in Cologne, before founding his advertising agency in nearby Wuppertal. Today, the couple live atop the bunker in a panoramic penthouse. "Still, after more than ten years, it feels unreal and strange to enter through 2.5-metre-thick walls into the building. The roof is three meters of corrugated iron and concrete, which reminds us of this force behind the construction," says Boros.

In the early Nineties, Berlin became a playground for artists, musicians and creative types, lured by cheap rents and liberal attitudes. How does the city's art scene stack up today? "I think it is still strong with good galleries and artists, and a number of interesting private collections and small institutions which are enriching the art scene," Boros says. "I hope that one day there will be more high quality, sophisticated museum exhibitions. In my opinion, Berlin is putting too much effort into museum buildings rather than its content."

Responsible for VIP Relations of Art Basel since 2005, Boros advises new collectors to visit galleries, museums and shows as much as possible. "A collection has to start with oneself, you have to know what you are passionate about and what you would like to know and experience. Some people are very clear with it, some intuitive. It's very subjective," she says. "To own a work is to be constantly in discussion with the artist, his ideas and topics."

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Image © Wolfgang Stahr



The chef: Tim Raue

When Tim Raue became the first German chef to star in the acclaimed Netflix series, *Chef's Table*, food writer Ursula Heinzlmann summed up his enormous impact on his hometown: "If Tim Raue didn't exist for Berlin's food scene, you'd need to invent him because he represents so much of what Berlin and food is all about."

Restaurant Tim Raue has been awarded two Michelin stars, ranks on the World's 50 Best Restaurants list, and was given a near-perfect 19.5 out of 20 in the latest Gault & Millau restaurant guide. Serving Asian-inspired cuisine that combines Thai flavours, Japanese ingredient obsession and Cantonese cooking philosophy, it is credited with kickstarting Berlin's transformation as the most exciting dining destination in Germany.

"The city became extremely diverse," reflects Raue. "[Today], there is almost nothing you do not find, culinary-wise, in Berlin. It is a vibrant city that grew with people from all over the world that came to live here. Nowadays, we have plenty of restaurants in every price level and I think this is amazing."

The restaurant sits on the edges of Kreuzberg, the poor West Berlin neighbourhood where Raue grew up in the divided city, and now one of Berlin's coolest districts. The entrance is flanked by an original concrete section of the Berlin Wall, covered in graffiti; around the corner is Checkpoint Charlie, the crossing point that came to symbolise the Cold War.

"It's all about the Wall," says the 45-year-old chef. "[The fall of the Wall in 1989] made people from all around the globe come to Berlin, because it offered an atmosphere of freedom where people are still able to live as whatever they want to be. Berlin was, and is, totally open-minded to everyone, especially to outsiders and highly individual people who want to express themselves. It became a melting pot full of creativity."

After a difficult childhood marred by neglect and abuse, Raue joined a notorious street gang in his teens. "Nothing else mattered to me than

being a part of this group, which I called my family back then because I had none other. When I finally started my career as a chef at 16, my whole life changed and was only about work," he says. In 1997, aged 23, Raue became head chef at one of Berlin's top restaurants; a decade later, he scored his first Michelin star at Swissotel's Restaurant 44 in the capital.

At the time, the city's fine-dining scene was dominated by restaurants serving classical French fare in hushed, starched-tablecloth surroundings. As culinary director for Swissotel, Raue often travelled to the company's headquarters in Singapore and throughout Asia. "I pretty much fell in love with the techniques and flavours in Asia. And after some years, I decided to change my style of cooking," he says.

Inspired by the bold flavours of Asian cuisine and the social style of eating, in 2008, Raue opened Ma Tim Raue in the historic Hotel Adlon, which quickly won a Michelin star. In 2010, he decided to go it alone and, just two months after opening, his eponymous restaurant was awarded one star. A second star soon followed in 2012.

These days, the restaurant is fully booked almost every day. "We could sell the restaurant two or three times a day on weekends," he adds. Intense and highly-driven, Raue continuously seeks to improve dishes, such as the signature wasabi langoustine and his take on Peking duck. He has also learned what doesn't work in Berlin.

"Ten years ago, I used some absurd ingredients from Chinese and Japanese cuisines, which are extremely popular there, but do not arouse any enthusiasm among Europeans," he says. "I always wanted to present something extraordinary and quite different from all other chefs in Germany. It took some time for me to understand that this signature style is not about absurd products, but about a world of flavours."

Now a veteran of Berlin's dining scene, Raue's influence shows no signs of waning.

tim-raue.com