

# Charlottenburger Altbau

circa 1880

Featuring luxurious touches like fanciful statuary, ornate wrought iron, or stained glass, the turn-of-the-century apartment buildings in West Berlin are the wedding cakes of Berlin residential architecture. If you catch somebody entering or leaving, try to catch a glimpse of the entry hall – it won't disappoint!



Unlike in the East, where the balconies and decorations may have been removed during the DDR and then later added in a luxury renovation, these decorations are likely original.

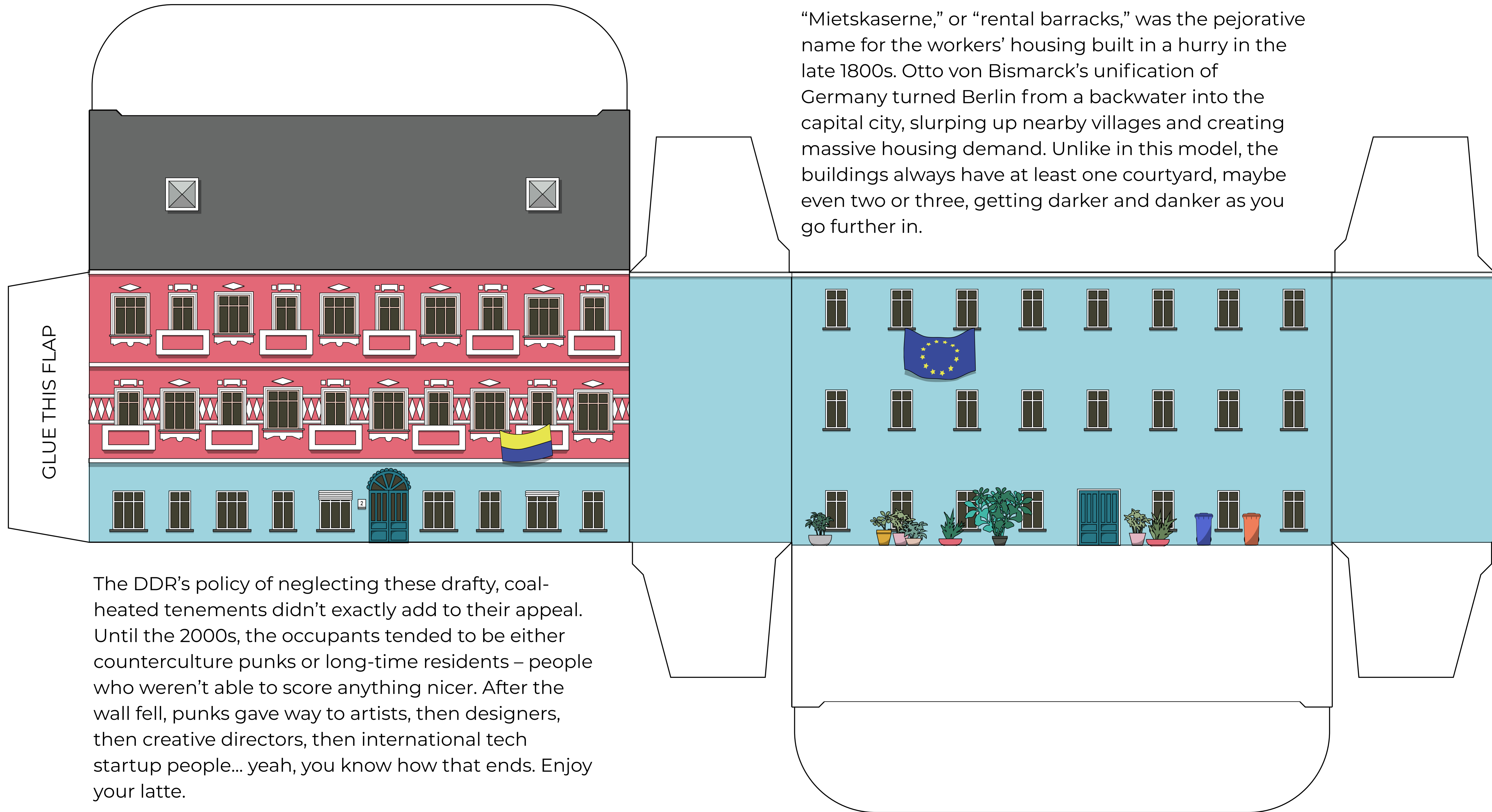
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# Arnimkiez Altbau

circa 1900

“Mietskaserne,” or “rental barracks,” was the pejorative name for the workers’ housing built in a hurry in the late 1800s. Otto von Bismarck’s unification of Germany turned Berlin from a backwater into the capital city, slurping up nearby villages and creating massive housing demand. Unlike in this model, the buildings always have at least one courtyard, maybe even two or three, getting darker and danker as you go further in.



The DDR’s policy of neglecting these drafty, coal-heated tenements didn’t exactly add to their appeal. Until the 2000s, the occupants tended to be either counterculture punks or long-time residents – people who weren’t able to score anything nicer. After the wall fell, punks gave way to artists, then designers, then creative directors, then international tech startup people... yeah, you know how that ends. Enjoy your latte.

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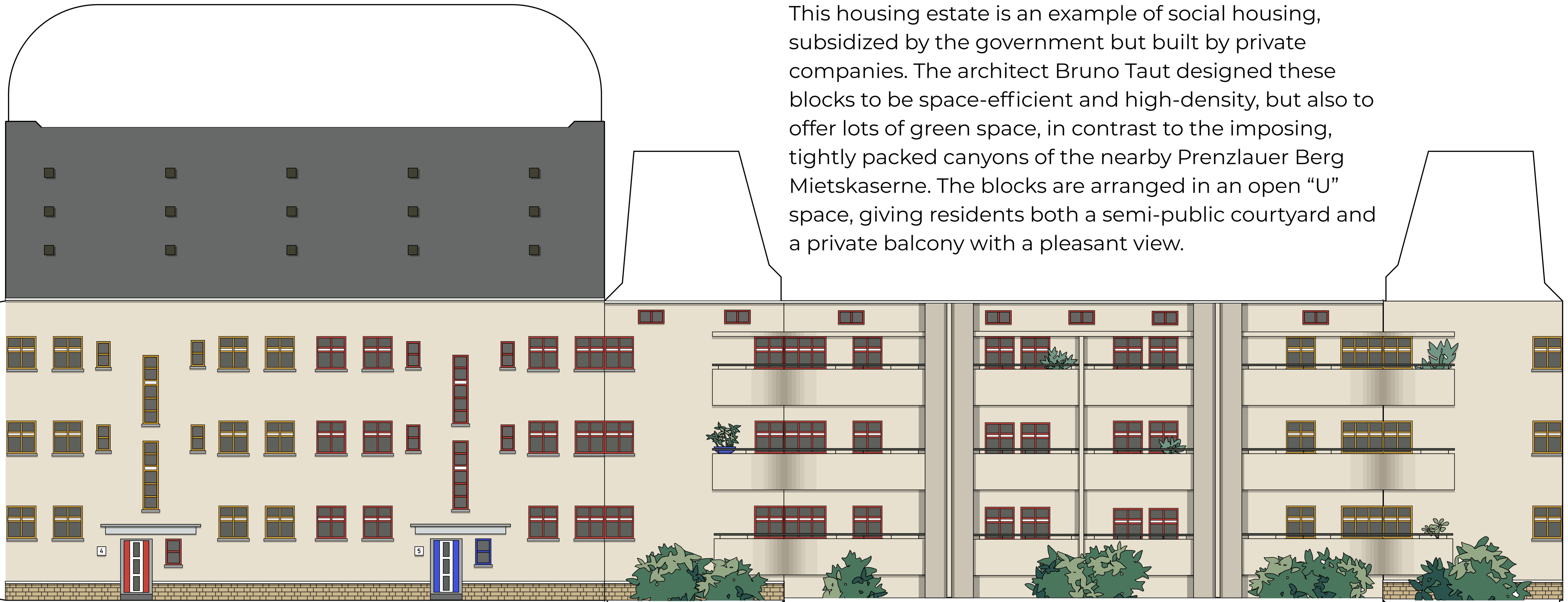
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# Carl-Legien-Siedlung

1928-1930

This housing estate is an example of social housing, subsidized by the government but built by private companies. The architect Bruno Taut designed these blocks to be space-efficient and high-density, but also to offer lots of green space, in contrast to the imposing, tightly packed canyons of the nearby Prenzlauer Berg Mietskaserne. The blocks are arranged in an open “U” space, giving residents both a semi-public courtyard and a private balcony with a pleasant view.

GLUE THIS FLAP



The Carl-Legien-Siedlung is one of six “Siedlung der Berliner Moderne” in the city. All six housing projects are listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites. This is generally a good thing, but does create restrictions. For example, a residents’ association have been fighting with the city since 2021 for the right to plant trees in front of the buildings, since the view of the cement façade is technically under historical protection. Fortunately, this is only a paper model and you are thus free to do whatever you want with it. Just don’t tell the Stadtentwicklungsamt.

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# Marzahn Plattenbau

1971

The DDR inherited serious housing problems. The older buildings still standing after wartime bombing often had coal heat, shared bathrooms, and no hot water. "Plattenbau" refers to the prefabricated concrete slabs that allowed these more modern, comfortable apartment buildings to be built quickly and cheaply, often in the inner eastern suburbs.



This building is a type called WHH GT 18, or Wohnhochhaus Großtafelbauweise 18, the biggest of the DDR Plattenbau types. (The 18 stands for 18 stories, but I could only get 11 stories in this paper model.)

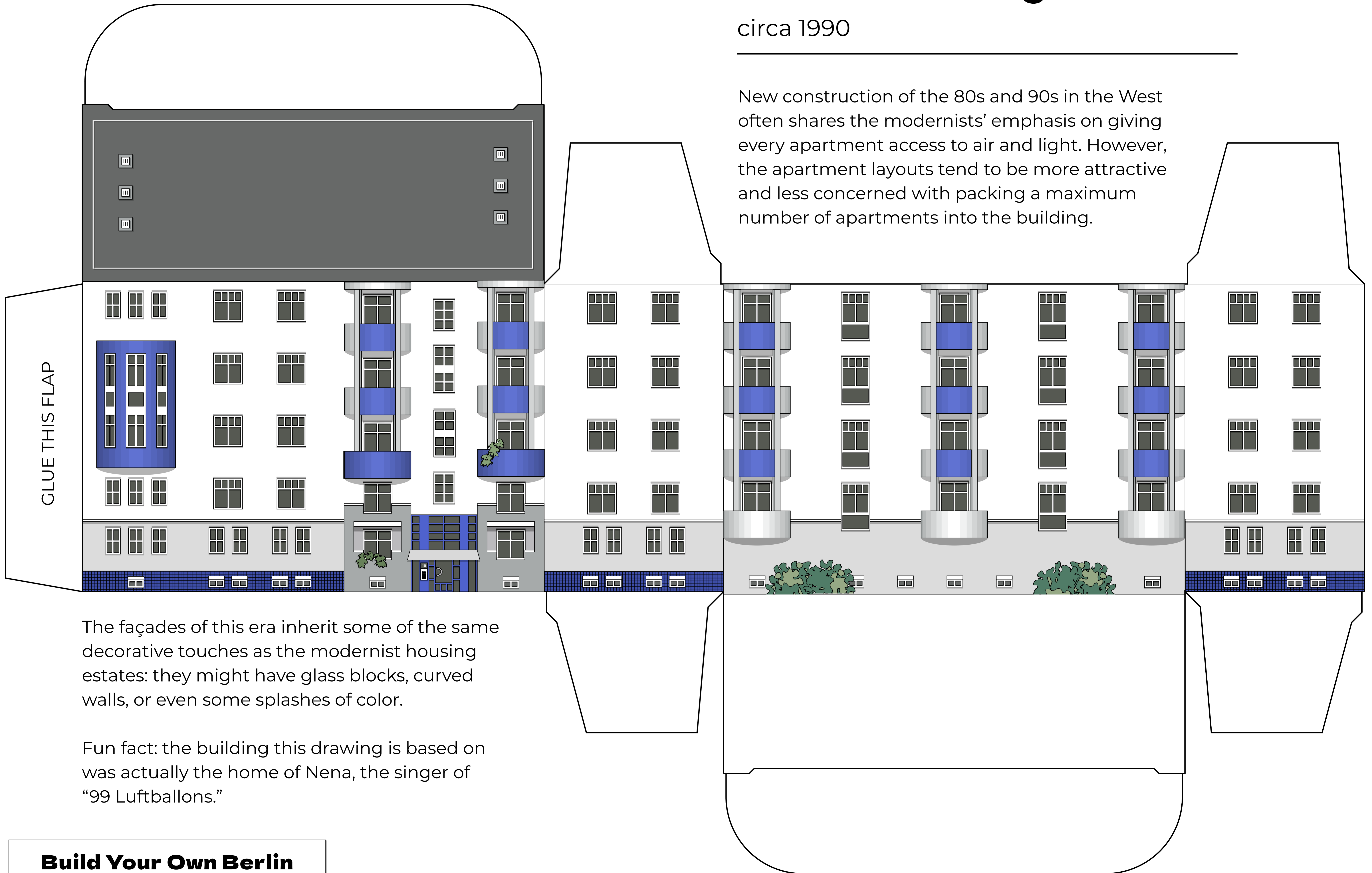
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# Charlottenburger Neubau

circa 1990

New construction of the 80s and 90s in the West often shares the modernists' emphasis on giving every apartment access to air and light. However, the apartment layouts tend to be more attractive and less concerned with packing a maximum number of apartments into the building.



The façades of this era inherit some of the same decorative touches as the modernist housing estates: they might have glass blocks, curved walls, or even some splashes of color.

Fun fact: the building this drawing is based on was actually the home of Nena, the singer of "99 Luftballons."

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