

HANDSHAPE PROJECT

The Art of ——— Connection

creatuals.

Marking Moments

Stone skipping on the lake / Friendship / Love / Freedom / Do not like rich football clubs / Love for language / Grew up by the sea / Sense of giving back / Teaching art / Clumsiness / Being shy / Colorful hair / Two Belgians in Berlin / Black Pink (K-Pop) / Drumsticks / Lived in the GDR / Love nature and animals / Favorite color is red / Love for books / Hope for a better future for everyone / Common French ancestors / Football: both center backs / Superheroes and loyalty / German refugees / Living with autism / Love for snow / Impact of fall of the Berlin wall / The book "The God of small things" / Strangers to our countries / Like unicorns / Theatre and feminism / Both born in formerly divided countries / Invent games / Play ukulele and guitar / I still love you / I love you too / Not wasting our lives / Crossing borders / Children with special needs / Water polo / Warmth of human contact / Techno / Love helping people / Quit job to travel / Grandparents emigrated to USA / Jesus / Ella Fitzgerald / Improve women's working conditions / Fast and expensive cars / Live in the same London neighborhood / Bad relationship with father / Fear of spiders / Joy of life / Climbing trees / Turkish / Left-handed / Violence is no solution / Learning from history / Borders should matter less / Both our family histories are connected to the wall / Helping drug addicts / Bossa Nova / Freckles / Family connection Brazil-Germany / Both saw fall of the wall on TV / Became dads at age 26 / No Trump Wall! / Follow the heart / Want a job with impact / Similar moral mind-set / Same shoe size / Kids of a free Europe / Anti-Fascists / Dislike social media / Born in West-Berlin / Both insomniacs / Like to dance / Imbalance / Coping with health issues / Both want equality / Solidarity / District politicians / Beautiful eyes / Self discovery in India / Fell in love at age 16 / Everyone should plant a tree / Don't like country music / Berlin Mitte citizens since 1975 / Feminism / All people are equal / Capoeira / Listened to Canadian radio growing up / Power of imagination / We like women / Same salaries in East and West Germany / No food waste / Similar nightmares / Love gardening / Respectful communication / Mental health / Love swimming in the ocean / Climate activism / We are tall / Hoping for peace in Hong Kong / Tchaikovsky / Dust allergy / Singing / Queer community as family / Humor / Like talking to strangers / Two real Berliners / Italian ancestors / Martial arts / Working with refugees / Like the changing colors of leaves / East German Childhood / Love for art / Love for logic / The importance of dif-

ferent perspectives / Despair / Jewish ancestors / Both dreamers / Like laughing / Trust in surprise / Digest news through comedy / Late risers / Fear of flying / Architecture Stone skipping on the lake / Friendship / Love / Freedom / Do not like rich football clubs / Love for language / Grew up by the sea / Sense of giving back / Teaching art / Clumsiness / Being shy / Colorful hair / Two Belgians in Berlin / Black Pink (K-Pop) / Drumsticks / Lived in the GDR / Love nature and animals / Favorite color is red / Love for books / Hope for a better future for everyone / Common French ancestors / Football: both center backs / Superheroes and loyalty / German refugees / Living with autism / Love for snow / Impact of fall of the Berlin wall / The book "The God of small things" / Strangers to our countries / Like unicorns / Theatre and feminism / Both born in formerly divided countries / Invent games / Play ukulele and guitar / I still love you / I love you too / Not wasting our lives / Crossing borders / Children with special needs / Water polo / Warmth of human contact / Techno / Love helping people / Quit job to travel / Grandparents emigrated to USA / Jesus / Ella Fitzgerald / Improve women's working conditions / Fast and expensive cars / Live in the same London neighborhood / Bad relationship with father / Fear of spiders / Joy of life / Climbing trees / Turkish / Left-handed / Violence is no solution / Learning from history / Borders should matter less / Both our family histories are connected to the wall / Helping drug addicts / Bossa Nova / Freckles / Family connection Brazil-Germany / Both saw fall of the wall on TV / Became dads at age 26 / No Trump Wall! / Follow the heart / Want a job with impact / Similar moral mind-set / Same shoe size / Kids of a free Europe / Anti-Fascists / Dislike social media / Born in West-Berlin / Both insomniacs / Like to dance / Imbalance / Coping with health issues / Both want equality / Solidarity / District politicians / Beautiful eyes / Self discovery in India / Fell in love at age 16 / Everyone should plant a tree / Don't like country music / Berlin Mitte citizens since 1975 / Feminism / All people are equal / Capoeira / Listened to Canadian radio growing up / Power of imagination / We like women / Same salaries in East and West Germany / No food waste / Similar nightmares / Love gardening / Respectful communication / Mental health / Love swimming in the ocean / Climate activism / We are tall / Hoping for peace in Hong Kong / Tchaikovsky / Dust allergy / Singing / Queer community as family / Humor / Like talking to strangers / Two real Berliners /

A black and white photograph of two men standing and talking against a textured wall. A bright yellow horizontal band is superimposed over the middle of the image. The man on the left is Black, wearing a dark jacket and a striped scarf, with his hands clasped. The man on the right is white, wearing a light-colored long-sleeved shirt and a dark cap, with his hands open in a gesturing motion. The text "TWO STRANGERS MEET." is centered within the yellow band.

TWO STRANGERS MEET.

A black and white photograph of two men in conversation against a textured wall. The man on the left is seen from the back, wearing a dark jacket and a striped scarf. The man on the right is facing him, wearing a light-colored sweater and a baseball cap, with his hand raised in a gesturing motion. A horizontal yellow band is superimposed over the upper portion of the image, containing the text.

THEY SHARE STORIES.
FIND COMMON GROUND.



THEY SHAKE HANDS,
ENCLOSING A BALL OF
SOFT CLAY.



THROUGH THIS BOND THE
CLAY IS SHAPED.





THE OUTCOME—IN CLAY—
REPRESENTS THE CONNECTION
AND THE COMMON GROUND
BETWEEN THOSE TWO PEOPLE.

HANDSHAPE PROJECT BY CREATUALS

Concept ————— Meike Ziegler





"WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THAT WE'RE ALL INTERCONNECTED. WE HAVE NO OTHER OPTION BUT TO OPEN UP TO ONE ANOTHER ONCE WE ACKNOWLEDGE THIS FACT.

NEVER UNDERESTIMATE THE POWER OF HUMAN CONNECTION. WE ALL HAVE DEEP DESIRES TO CONNECT WITH ONE ANOTHER. BY REACHING OUT AND OPENING UP TO ONE ANOTHER, WE CAN OVERCOME THE DIFFERENCES THAT DIVIDE US.

I CREATED HANDSHAPE IN AN ATTEMPT TO VISUALIZE OUR HUMAN CONNECTION. HANDSHAPE IS A VISIBLE, TANGIBLE TESTIMONY TO OUR SHARED HUMANITY."

Meike Zeigler
Creative Alchemist



Who contributed to this book's realization?:

CREATUALS	Meike Ziegler & Ivan Gabor
Book Design	CREATUALS & Yew Kee Chung
Text	Lara Kristiansen, Liz Parker, Aly Cha
Photography	Samu Gabor, Magdalena Kjessel, Dirk Mathesius, Philip Koschel, Julyan Kaplan, Benedict Kurzen, Gert Jan Stam, Johanna Lucht, Kadir van Lohuizen



CONTENTS

22	HANDSHAPE CONCEPT Prologue Handshape is about dismantling walls that divide
24	BERLIN HANDSHAPE 2019 A project to commemorate the 30 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall
26	Step 1: Strangers
32	Step 2: Connect
38	Step 3: Shake
44	Step 4: Shape
48	Step 5: Story
54	Step 6: Symbol
66	Celebrating the spirit of 1989

	BEHIND THE SCENES
70	Making it happen
74	Where we collected
76	Encounter architecture
78	“More Handshapes would make the world a better place”— Interview with Axel Klausmeier
82	HANDSHAPE GALLERY 2020
90	CREATUALS
	PROJECT PARTNERS
94	Contributors

HANDSHAPE CONCEPT

PROLOGUE

Handshape is about dismantling walls that divide

There are moments in life when we reach out our hand without wondering whether the person we approach is a friend or a stranger. That is because we are all humans and fundamentally the same. Handshape was born from this, from a longing to build bridges, not walls. It is a symbol of our collective aspiration for a better world, the world we want to live in.

Practically speaking, Handshape is about stepping out of your comfort zone and opening up to another human being—regardless of his or her background. It is about exchanging stories and realizing that we have more things in common than we have differences. To create a lasting manifestation of this encounter, a Handshape is formed from a ball of soft clay as two hands meet in a firm and friendly handshake.

Artist Meike Ziegler developed the concept behind Handshape in 2017 as a symbol of connection. It was first realized as the Berlin Handshape Project in 2019, and came about in collaboration with Ivan Gabor, *visitBerlin*, Berlin Wall Foundation and Stammpunkt to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Throughout the summer and autumn of 2019 a team of connectors worked to gather these clay tributes to human connection from all over the city of Berlin, amassing no fewer than 10.957 Handshapes—one for each day that passed between November 9 1989 and November 9 2019. Over 20.000 people came together to create one of these symbols of our shared humanity, which together formed a Monument to Human Connection.

One year later, as this catalogue goes to print, the global corona pandemic has made the core gesture of the Handshape ritual—the handshake—unthinkable, at least temporarily, while social distancing measures are in place. Whilst it is currently not possible to connect on a physical level, this catalogue is your invitation to reflect upon the importance of dismantling our internal and external dividing walls by opening up to one another, even if that means stepping out of our comfort zone. And luckily, this virus cannot stop us from sharing stories. In the pages to come we are glad to be able to share the fascinating Handshape story with you.

Meike Ziegler and Ivan Gabor
November 2020

BERLIN HANDSHAPE 2019

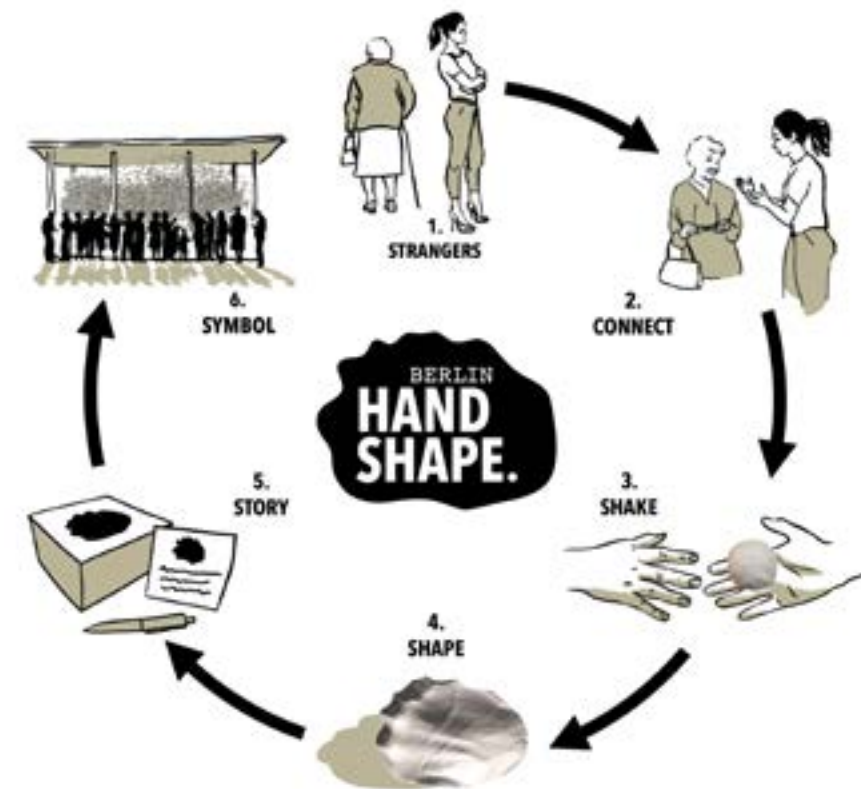
A project to commemorate the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Wall

November 9 2019 marked the passing of three decades since the night the Berlin Wall came down on November 9 1989. 30 years since the gates were opened between two parts of a country that had been divided for 28 years. 30 years—10.957 days. To celebrate this milestone, the Berlin Handshape Project went out in search of one unique Handshape for each day that had passed since this pivotal event in world history. Almost 22.000 strangers were invited to talk, share stories, find common ground and form human connections. Together they built a symbol of togetherness, a “Monument to Human Connection”.

The aim was to bring together people from diverse backgrounds and with different perspectives, to have them meet and get to know each other. Our team went on tour in each of the 12 Berlin districts. They went to markets, festivals, parks, schools, conferences, exhibitions, a street parade, a planetarium, a railway station and other public areas to include people of all ages from different parts of town and in different settings in the Berlin Handshape experience.

From July until November the project was represented at a stand at the Berlin Wall Memorial on Bernauer Strasse. Here we invited visitors from Berlin, from the rest of Germany and from all around the world to step out of their comfort zone und join our project.

Every single Handshape was archived online, so that each participant could revisit their unique Handshape in a virtual setting.





There's an art to bringing strangers together, to getting them to start a conversation and share something about themselves. There is no recipe.

Cedric
Handshape coordinator

Step ————— One

STRANGERS

AT OUR CENTRAL POINT AT THE WALL MEMORIAL AND IN ALL 12 DISTRICTS OF BERLIN, OUR INTERNATIONAL TEAM* OF HANDSHAPE CONNECTORS INVITED PEOPLE FROM ALL WALKS OF LIFE TO PARTICIPATE IN OUR SOCIAL ART PROJECT FOR BERLIN. MEETING UP AT OUR CLAY-LADEN TROLLEYS, PAIRS OF STRANGERS BROKE THE ICE AND TOOK THE PLUNGE INTO AN OPEN-HEARTED EXCHANGE.

* From Mexico, Chile, Japan, USA, Greece, Italy, Spain, Argentina, Norway, France, Egypt, Poland, Germany, India, Holland, Israel, Romania, UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Hungary, Benin, and Lithuania.





I interacted with so many people and met truly amazing souls. Each of them had a different story and a different reason for being there. This inevitably led to beautiful moments, in which both would find things they had in common that they would have never imagined.

Sergio
Handshape connector

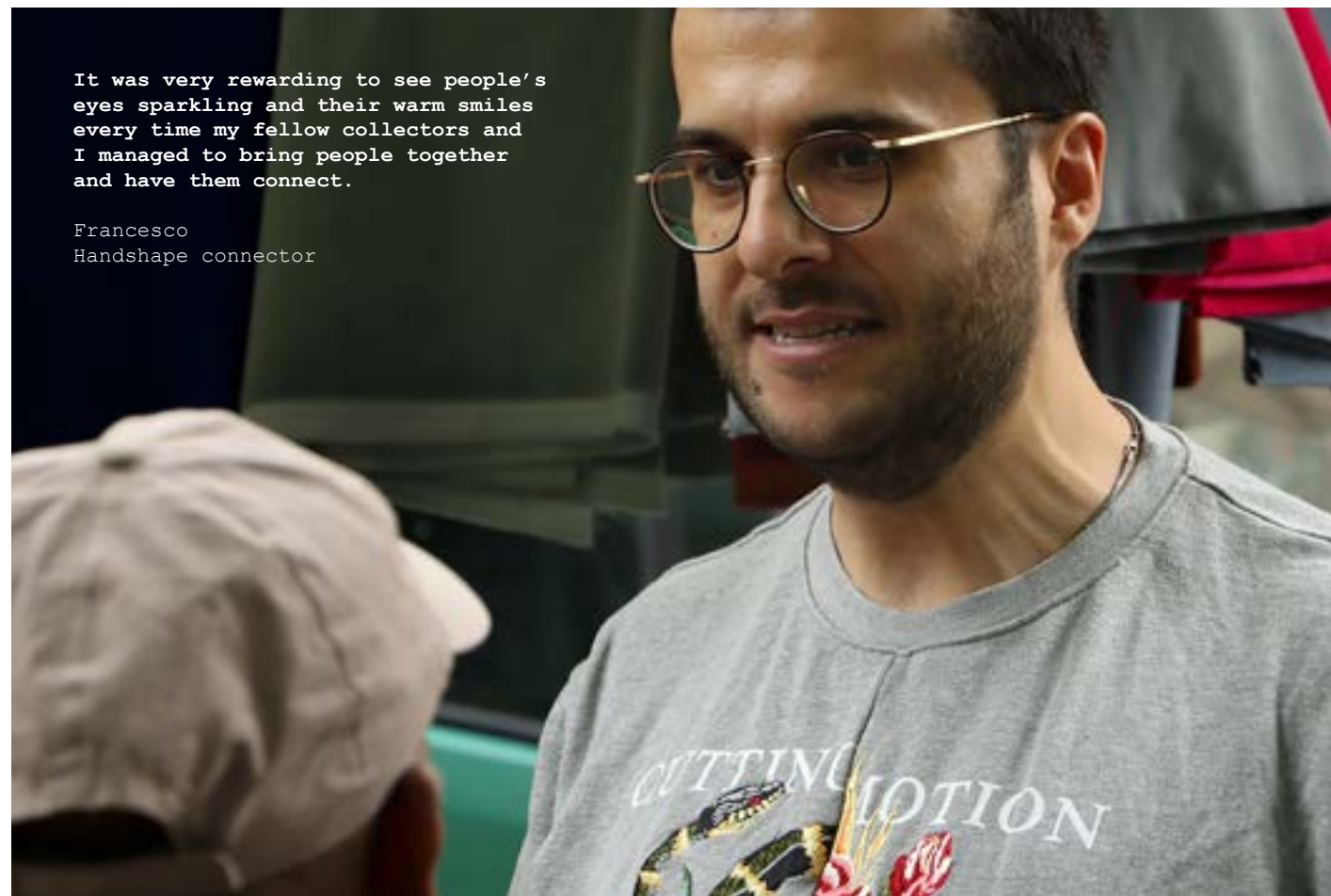




Step ————— Two

CONNECT

EACH PAIR OF STRANGERS WAS ENCOURAGED TO EXCHANGE THOUGHTS, VIEWPOINTS, FEARS, PASSIONS, FAVORITE DISHES, MEMORIES, HOBBIES—ANYTHING—AND BY TELLING THEIR STORIES FIND SOME COMMON GROUND, SOMETHING (ABSTRACT OR ACTUAL) THEY SHARED AS THEY CREATED THEIR UNIQUE HANDSHAPE TOGETHER. MANY THOUSANDS OF HUMAN ENCOUNTERS WERE FACILITATED, UNPREJUDICED AND RESPECTFUL CONVERSATIONS WERE HELD (SOME SHORT, SOME LONGER), COMFORT ZONES WERE LEFT AND LANGUAGE BARRIERS OVERCOME AS STORIES WERE SHARED BETWEEN DIFFERENT CULTURES AND DIFFERENT GENERATIONS.



It was very rewarding to see people's eyes sparkling and their warm smiles every time my fellow collectors and I managed to bring people together and have them connect.

Francesco
Handshape connector



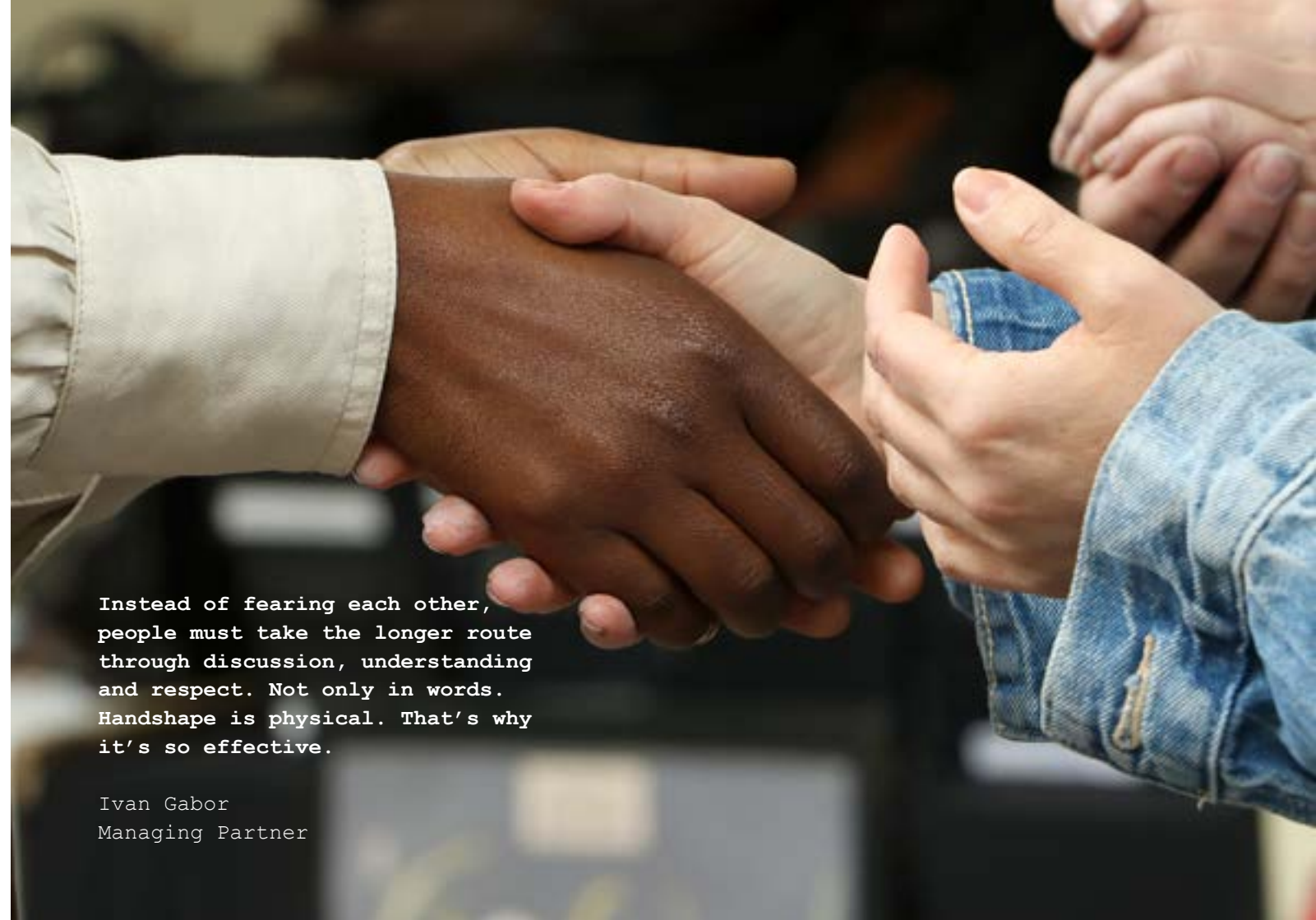




Step ————— Three

SHAKE

THE CENTRAL ELEMENT OF THE RITUAL—
THE SHAKING OF HANDS AROUND A BALL OF
SOFT CLAY—OFTEN FORMED A STRONG
EMOTIONAL EXPERIENCE, DURING WHICH
BROAD SMILES AND SOMETIMES TEARS
WERE SHARED.



Instead of fearing each other,
people must take the longer route
through discussion, understanding
and respect. Not only in words.
Handshake is physical. That's why
it's so effective.

Ivan Gabor
Managing Partner





There is something about the material that gives the whole ritual a deeper meaning. I very much like the idea that the unique moment is still there, it is perpetuated in the clay.

Axel Klausmeier
Director of the
Berlin Wall Foundation

Step ————— Four

SHAPE

EVERY SINGLE PIECE OF CLAY SHAPED THROUGH
THESE HUMAN CONNECTIONS IS UNIQUE.
JUST AS UNIQUE AS EACH ENCOUNTER
BETWEEN A PAIR OF STRANGERS.

EVERY HANDSHAPE HOLDS THE EPHEMERAL
MOMENT OF CONNECTION IN ITSELF,
AND LIVES ON AS A PHYSICAL REMINDER
OF THE ENCOUNTER.

A simple handshake is often more meaningful than a thousand words, but often seems more difficult. The Berlin Handshape Project has brought together different hands in an artistic way, and to emphasize this even more, a lasting impression remains.

Sebastian
Handshape participant





Step ————— Five

STORY

BEFORE EACH FRESHLY FORMED HANDSHAPE WAS STORED TO DRY, IT WAS DEDICATED TO ONE OF THE 10.957 DATES BETWEEN NOVEMBER 9 1989 AND NOVEMBER 9 2019.

IN THIS WAY, EACH HANDSHAPE SYMBOLIZES— AND CELEBRATES—ONE PARTICULAR DAY THAT HAS PASSED SINCE THE FALL OF THE WALL. FOR EACH CONNECTION, WE WROTE DOWN THE NAMES OF THE TWO 'STRANGERS', THEIR PLACES OF ORIGIN, THE COMMON GROUND AND THE STORIES THEY SHARED AS THEY WERE MAKING THEIR HANDSHAPE.



What is it? | [Participate](#) | [Handshape archive](#) | [Contact](#)

Search your handshape by :

NAME	UNIQUE DATE	COMMON GROUND
	22.03.2003	V

YOUR HANDSHAPE

22.03.2003

NAME 1*	NAME 2*
Maria	Alexandra

Common ground NAME OF HANDSHAPE *

Same Perfume 'Chloe'

STORY

Two girls of the same age met at Gedankstätt Berliner Mauer on the 12th of July. From South Africa and Helsinki. North and South meet.

MARIA & ALEXANDRA





Step ————— Six

SYMBOL

TO REPRESENT THE TIME THAT HAS PASSED SINCE THE PEACEFUL FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL IN 1989, AND TO MARK THE VALUE AND IMPORTANCE OF HUMAN CONNECTIONS, THE INDIVIDUAL HANDSHAPES WERE ALL SUSPENDED TOGETHER IN SPACE, FORMING A POETIC AND PENETRABLE REMINDER OF OUR SHARED HUMANITY. THESE FLUID FORMATIONS WERE CREATED ON LOCATION AT THE BERLIN WALL MEMORIAL, ONE INSIDE AND ONE IN AN OPEN-AIR PAVILION. THE HANGING CONSTRUCTION WAS FACILITATED BY ARCHITECT DUO GERT-JAN STAM AND THOMAS BOHNE, WHO SPECIALIZE IN 'ENCOUNTER ARCHITECTURE'— SPATIAL SETTINGS AND PROCESSES THAT INVITE PEOPLE TO MEET AND INTERACT ON A PERSONAL LEVEL.



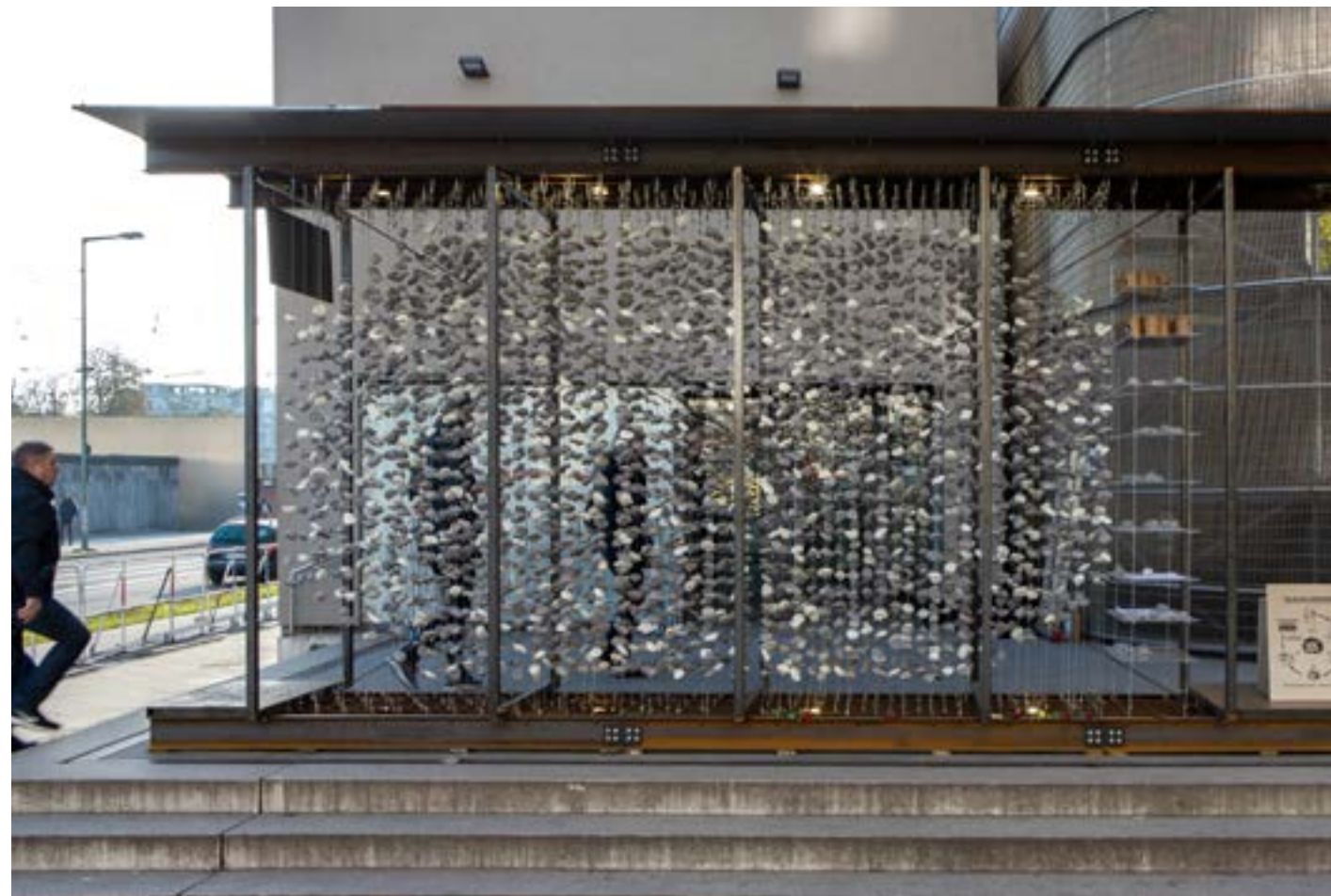
Berlin Handshape is a statement, a paradox, a gesture to show the world that, unlike the Berlin of 30+ years ago, today in this city people are connected in a ritual moment, using the same material the Wall was made from. From these concrete Handshapes we build a Monument to Human Connection, a Shrine, a Wall of Unification.

Meike Ziegler
Artist



The project invites people from all backgrounds to meet each other, and this is really the starting point for social change.

Gert-Jan & Thomas Architects









CELEBRATING THE SPIRIT OF 1989

VisitBerlin

“The Berlin Handshape Project is our collective commemoration of the 30 years that have passed since the fall of the Wall: hugs and a handshake between miraculously united people who were previously total strangers. Today the spirit of 1989 is still of great benefit for the world.” This is how Burkhard Kieker, CEO of *visitBerlin*, summarizes the Berlin Handshape Project. Without his support and that of his excellent *visitBerlin* team, which promotes Berlin city tourism in the broadest sense, this social art dream would never have come true. With their network all over Berlin, Burkhard and his colleagues opened the doors to every corner of the city for us, and facilitated additional financial support from the Berlin Senate.

Lutz Henke, officer for Culture at *visitBerlin*: “When the Peaceful Revolution of 1989 brought down the GDR regime and put an end to forced separation of friends, families and fellow citizens, the transformation of the Berlin Wall began. Formerly a tool of oppression, the painted and dissected concrete barrier turned into the universal symbol of freedom it is today. Scenes of joyful celebration on top of the colorfully painted former border fortification went around the world. Those visual icons inscribed themselves into a global collective memory while the physical wall itself disappeared piece by piece from its original site: Hordes of Berliners and visitors—so-called “Mauer-spechte” (wallpeckers)—brought hammers and chisels to break the barrier into colorful souvenirs which were dispersed around the globe.

Thirty years after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Berlin Handshape Project brings back memories of those events and encourages visitors and locals alike to approach one another, to be curious and to cherish the freedom of the city, still so recently won. It targets the very foundation and the most basic element of democratic society: unrestricted dialogue between two strangers. The joint creation of a Handshape becomes an intimate and very personal reminder of how important the removal of borders and the value of the Peaceful Revolution remain in the current climate. The gathering of more than 10.000 handshapes here in Berlin is representative of this collective idea. It also is a reversed actualization of the wallpecking from 30 years ago: this time a common creation, the material outcome of the encounter, remains on site, whilst its creators carry away their immaterial (or virtual) souvenirs—a memory, a shared story, and an impression left behind in Berlin.”



BEHIND THE SCENES

MAKING IT HAPPEN

Cedric Lecat and his team of connectors on gathering 10.957 Handshapes within just a few months.

Cedric is a Belgian pedagogue, social worker, intercultural trainer and artist based in Berlin since 2002. When joining the Berlin Handshape Project as the coordinator of the Handshape collecting process, he could make use of his rich experience in organizing international encounters all over Europe, where he focused on historical, political and intercultural education, creativity and anti-bias. For our project he gathered a diverse team of Handshape connectors from over 20 nationalities, different generations and one goal: create human connections.

Cedric: “Finding a job is a bit like dating. It is hard to find a perfect match. As an intercultural and anti-bias trainer I organize and lead seminars all over Europe, mostly with international groups of young adults. My goal in such encounters is to help the participants open their minds and build bridges between cultures and individuals—and, ultimately, to get to know each other and learn from one another. So when Meike and Ivan told me about their social art project, it felt like a perfect match. Not only could I fully understand what they wanted to achieve, I also felt a deep connection with the project. The concept’s simplicity and its many layers of meaning touched me. It was a wonderful challenge being in charge of the collection process.

Shortly after our first meeting we got started. There was much to do. With Meike, Ivan, and Johanna (another colleague) as the core team, the four of us turned Meike’s art studio into an office/meeting room/storage room/photo studio/creative space. We drafted concepts, ordered hundreds of kilos of clay, found suitable loca-

tions to collect the Handshapes, found partners, printed leaflets, shot a movie, took many pictures, had weekly meetings with our main partner *visitBerlin*, wrote articles, came up with numerous ideas to face the many challenges, launched two websites and social media pages, bought material and furniture, walked Dosha (Meike’s dog and our token furry team member), hunted for sponsors, gave interviews... and, most importantly: we organized the collection of the Handshapes.

It was clear to me that the success of our project depended entirely on the skills of our connectors—the voices, the faces, and the hands of Berlin Handshape. There is an art to bringing strangers together, to having them start a conversation and share something about themselves. There is no recipe. Each Handshape, each encounter, is unique and different from the previous one. A connector needs to be outgoing, open, clear, friendly, and able to adapt at a moment’s notice. I was a bit concerned about finding enough motivated and competent connectors, but I need not have worried.

The project attracted many wonderful people from all over the world. There were dancers, students, painters, architects, musicians, philosophers, social workers, writers, graphic designers, teachers, travellers, choreographers, film makers... each of them had a different personality and a unique approach. Each of them brought something very special to the project. And we did it! We collected Handshapes all over Berlin. At schools, flea markets, in the streets, at NGOs, hotels, markets, festivals, museums, under the sun, in the rain, on weekdays and at weekends. All in all, we brought over 20.000 people together to do the Berlin Handshape. That means over 20.000 people opened up to a stranger, shared their personal stories, and found common ground. We saw people exchanging phone numbers and addresses to stay in touch, and some even leaving together after having done a Handshape. We heard of friendships and love stories that began by doing a Handshape. We witnessed total strangers, skeptical at first, warming up to each other after a few sentences and ending up talking for ages. We saw people talking about history, politics, art, humanism, values, love, passions, family, travels, education. We saw them sharing their views, debating respectfully, listening to each other and bonding in just a short period of time. It was truly wonderful to see all these strangers connecting, not despite, but because of their differences. We felt lucky to be a part of it."

Sergio: "Indeed. It was such a beautiful mission to facilitate encounters between people and to bring about a physical memento from that interaction. The most interesting part of being a connector was the people and their unpredictability. Whenever I came to work as a connector, I never knew what was going to happen that day or whom I was going to meet. The team of connectors was so special as we came from all different parts of the world, but found we had so much in common in our love of art and our commitment to the vision of the project."

Bruno: "Being a Handshape connector led me to broaden my view of the world. By connecting people from all over the world I was able to experience that friendship has no color. I will always carry with me the faces of the many people from across the world that I saw connect though the project."

Chinatsu: "Besides probably being the one in the team who connected the most people, I also photographed two thirds of the individual Handshapes for the online archive. While photographing, all these valuable connections passed through my hands again, and I realized every Handshape now symbolizes two people's connection, as it holds its own history."

Lindsey: "I uploaded the images to the archive, and really enjoyed the chance to read what common ground connected the participants. Every upload was a teeny peek into the unique personal connection, some of which were funny and unexpected. It was a great task to 'be required' to read so many of them."

Sergio: "One of my favorite connections was with two women who came from different continents and met in Berlin. In the beginning neither of them was particularly interested in the project or in talking to each other. Once we connected them, they started talking and they got more and more excited about their interaction as time passed. There was a language and cultural barrier but that didn't matter at all. They were so happy they met that they ended up exchanging bracelets to remember each other and made plans for the following day to see each other again. The simplicity of a great connection and seeing them so happy that they exchanged gifts really made it stick in my mind."

Ambrose: "I vividly remember one experience between a man from the US and a woman from Germany. She spoke about growing up in Berlin and how her maternal and paternal grandparents lived on different sides of the wall, and the difficulties that presented for her and her parents. The man told of how his great-grandparents

had fled Russia and come to the US during the Russian pogroms in order to escape persecution, in turn leaving their families and all that they knew behind. This was a really powerful story. Another time we were working at a food market and the woman working on the cheese stall next to us seemed skeptical of the project and didn't seem very keen on the idea of Handshape. After a while, after seeing people enjoy it, she eventually opened up and told us some great stories about her joy watching East Berliners coming into West Germany as the wall came down."

WHERE WE COLLECTED

The Berlin Wall Memorial's Documentation Centre; Werner von Siemens Gymnasium (high school); Metropolitan School; Berlin-Brandenburg International School; French School; Q-conference, YPO conference; Nelson Mandela Exhibition at Bikini Berlin; Friedrichstraßenfest (street festival); Berlin Pride parade; Aufbau Haus (creative centre); fez (centre for children, youth and family); Zeiss Major Planetarium; Theater an der Parkaue (young state theatre); anZiehmarkt (flea market); Breitenbachplatz (flea market); “Unveiled. Berlin and its Monuments” Exhibition at Spandau Citadel; Trödelmarkt Ollenhauerstraße (flea market); Magical Festival of Lights at Gärten der Welt; Bauernmarkt Wittenbergplatz (farmers market); Tempelhofer Feld (park); Nowkoelln Flowmarkt (flea market); S-Bahn station Charlottenburg (railway station); Peacebuilders Summit (workshop).

Our main partner, *visitBerlin*, collected Handshapes in Germany (Berlin, Kiel, Frankfurt, Potsdam), and took Handshape around the world during their marketing activities. They went as far afield as Great Britain (London), France (Paris), Spain (Madrid), the Czech Republic (Prague), Poland (Warsaw, Krakow), Hungary (Budapest), Belgium (Brussels), Brazil, Israel (Tel Aviv), Netherlands (Amsterdam), China (Hong Kong, Shanghai), USA (New York, Texas). They also did Handshaping sessions as part of the “HIER IN BERLIN” neighborhood program, during which the future of Berlin tourism is discussed with locals. This part of the Handshape collection process was a close collaborative effort of *visitBerlin* and the Berlin districts, and was supported by Berlin’s Senate Department for Economics, Energy and Public Enterprise.



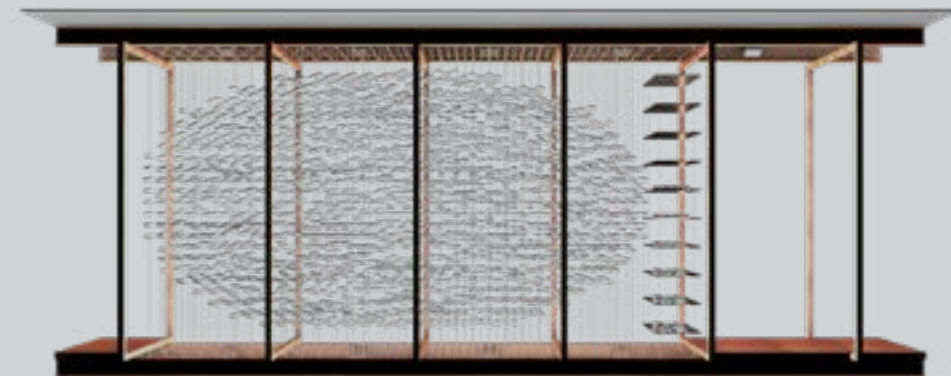
ENCOUNTER ARCHITECTURE

The hanging mechanism for the inside and the pavilion installations as well as the framework for the Monument to Human Connection were all made possible thanks to the invaluable help of Gert-Jan Stam and Thomas Bohne of Stammpunkt. The architect duo designs what they call ‘encounter architecture’—spatial settings and processes that invite people to meet each other on a personal level.

“Our philosophy is completely in line with the idea of Handshape, which takes a simple yet poetic ritual as the medium for connecting people”, Gert-Jan Stam explains. “To us the encounter is essential as it opens completely new and unexpected possibilities for exchange. The spatial structure plays an important role in this process of approaching and opening up to a stranger. The Handshape Project invites people from all backgrounds to meet each other and this is really the starting point for social change.”

Once the first 3.500 or so Handshapes had been successfully collected, they were strung together and displayed as an indoor installation at the Berlin Wall Memorial’s Documentation Centre, blending beautifully with the permanent exhibition. For the official festival week commemorating the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall around November 9 2019, the symbolic ‘Wall of Unification’ in the form of a steel and plexiglass pavilion outside the Documentation Centre provided a temporary home for the other 7.500 Handshapes.

“We immediately saw the enormous potential of this simple clay-sculpture ritual”, the architects recollect. “The challenge is to think of it not as a visual project but really as a social process that not only allows for people to connect with each other but also resonates with this feeling and need for real human connection that is most urgent in the world today. Apart from the potential to bring people together it opens up spaces to rethink and discuss how our communities, cities and societies are constructed. And to become aware that each individual can play a valuable role in that.”



“MORE HANDSHAPES WOULD MAKE THE WORLD A BETTER PLACE”

Interview with Axel Klausmeier

Axel Klausmeier is a German art and architecture historian, and has been the director of the Berlin Wall Foundation since 2009. We sat down with him to find out what intrigued him about the Berlin Handshape Project, discussed different approaches to learning from history, and reflected on how powerful art can be in crossing the mental and physical divide.

Lara Kristiansen: *What was it about the concept of our project that convinced you to offer the Berlin Wall Memorial as the main location for Handshape collecting, and even hosting the inside and pavilion installations?*

Axel Klausmeier: I very much liked the idea that strangers meet and make contact. Especially at a site where it is all about division on the one hand, and dismantling walls and borders on the other. I thought it was a very telling gesture. Handshakes are understood world-wide as a symbol of coming together, of making friends, or also just a first introduction, getting in touch with somebody. It is a first approach towards crossing a mental or social border by saying “hello”. Of course the handshake and this caused me initially to have some doubts about the project—does have a historic connotation in Germany about which I warned Meike and Ivan. It is the symbol of the former Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED), a forceful merger of the Social Democratic and Communist parties. I wanted to make sure there would be no misunderstanding of this traditional symbol of handshakes in our context.

And of course this represented a powerful opportunity to change this connotation and turn the symbol into something new.

Exactly. It is an intelligent artistic move to overcome this and play around with it. Nevertheless it is vital for us to point out that we are aware of the history. What is important here is that it is a voluntary procedure, not one carried out by force.

What was your experience doing a Handshape yourself?

I did several, one of which was with my partner. Of course we have done ordinary handshakes a thousand times, but this was something special because there is something about the material, it gives the whole ritual a deeper meaning. I very much like the idea that this unique moment is still there, it is perpetuated.

How do you think Handshape could live on in different contexts?

It is a very symbolic act, and I believe that it could be done anywhere where people meet in public spaces, especially at politically sensitive locations, where people come to discuss former tragedies, or a difficult period in history. It is very meaningful, and can function as a gesture of reconciliation. The options are endless, it could be done anywhere, but especially where coming together, meeting and making friends is so symbolic.

How did people at the Memorial react to the project, both the visitors and your team?

My team was instantly convinced that this was something special, especially when they learned that the Handshapes would be presented in a sculpture. When the installation emerged they were thrilled by its aesthetic quality. I think the visitors experienced it in a similar way. Some of them were very hesitant, and did not know how to deal with it. But as soon as they understood what it was about—and what it was about for them personally—they changed their minds, and were happy to join. I always like it when art irritates a little, when it does something you would not expect, and enriches your life through that. It makes people think.

The look on people’s faces when they understood the point of the project was also my favorite part of the connecting process. It was nice to create a space for this kind of moments.

Generally shaking hands is so accepted worldwide, although this is not so in every single country. But in general it is accepted, and yet, the conversion of this generally accepted, ordinary gesture into something special lends it extra value.

What extra value did the project bring to the Memorial?

It certainly enriched the overall experience. We have many different approaches here to learning from and interpreting history. The first is our exhibition, which is about passing on knowledge in a very academic, perhaps for some at least—in a rather traditional, if not “dry” way. There are facts and figures, images and contemporary witnesses provide information. We also do guided tours, and we have an outside area where visitors can literally walk the former death strip, an area where people were killed. Another facet is our Chapel of Reconciliation, for those who are religious or like to contemplate in a very special room. Some of our visitors become very emotional there, whereas others are not touched at all, because they do not have a belief. We also offer experiences for children etc. The Handshape project was an opportunity to provide our visitors with a different perspective. It is artistic and personal, and through this immediate contact it makes you think about meeting humans. For many people it is perhaps not self-evident that you meet someone from South-America, or Russia or China or wherever, and all of a sudden you meet at this historic site, you touch, and you exchange. The site where once there was a divide became one which brought people together.

How did the project embody the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall?

Lots went on in Berlin during the festivities. There were large ceremonies, concerts, podium discussions, everything... The Berlin Handshape added beautifully to the overall experience. It was a very down-to-earth, simple experience yet one which was well thought out to help us more easily cross mental and physical borders.

What message would you like to share when you think of the Handshape project?

More Handshapes would make the world a better place.



HANDSHAPE GALLERY 2020

30 HANDSHAPES

In 2019 the Berlin Handshape Project invited locals and visitors from all across the world to exchange stories and find common ground with one another. One year later we find ourselves in the middle of a global pandemic, and one might ask:

How can we even find firm let alone common ground in such unstable times? In many ways it feels like the coronavirus has pulled the rug from beneath our feet, reshaping the world around us. Basic human habits such as shaking hands or hugging have become a thing of the past, and we have to relearn how to interact with each other. Compulsory facemasks as a measure for reducing the risk of infection, have sparked heated debates about individual freedom vs. the vital importance of our health. In this way the virus has built new invisible walls within our societies.

Making sense of the rapid changes caused by the pandemic is not an easy task. What has become clearer than ever though is that we as humans are all connected and that our lives are intertwined. This basic human interconnectivity and interdependency was one of the main messages the Berlin Handshape Project sought to emphasize as it commemorated the peaceful fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989.

The presence of Covid-19 in our lives has brought clearly to the surface all those points of human connection, which are normally forgotten, overlooked, almost seem invisible. The space between objects or people is now first and foremost seen as the space occupied by the virus. When the Handshapes were made a year ago, it was the void between two hands that was enclosed in the ball of clay. As such, these Handshapes bear the ephemeral moments of connection in themselves, moments of connection that are now prohibited—or out of reach in a time where social distancing is the mantra.

Against this backdrop, many questions arise: How can the conversation about the fundamental importance of openhearted human connection be kept alive despite all this? How can we respectfully relate to one another in this “new normal”? How can we reach out a hand in solidarity when the exchange of body warmth in a handshake is seen as a health risk?

This gallery of Handshapes seeks to highlight 30 of the 10.957 Handshapes gathered last year. Each shape represents one year between 1989 and 2019, holds one unique human connection and celebrates one special piece of common ground.



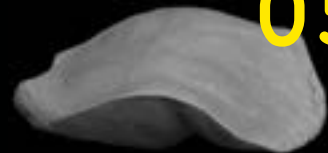
01
STONE SKIPPING
ON THE LAKE
Rebecca (Germany) & Nathan (USA)
07.05.1990



04
LOVE THE CHANGING COLORS
OF LEAVES
Roham (India) & Natalia (Germany)
09.05.1993



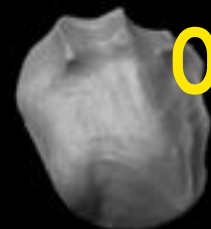
03
TWO REAL BERLINERS
Birgit (Germany) & Marie-Luise (Germany)
15.01.1992



05
SOPRANO
Maylis (France) & Keyllisia (France)
18.02.1994



02
CURIOSITY
Susi (Brazil) & Sandra (Denmark)
25.04.1991



06
ARTISTS
Olga (Poland) & Marona (Netherlands)
25.09.1995



09
FANTASY LITERATURE
Magali (France) & Coralie (France)
09.05.1998



08
EXPENSIVE CARS
Roisin (Ireland) & Pedro (Portugal)
18.01.1997



10
SURFING
Marlies (Austria) & Harry (Australia)
23.11.1999



07
VANITY
Tine (Germany) & Sebastian (Germany)
17.01.1996



11

VANILLA ICE CREAM

Chrissy (USA) & Samu (Hungary)

12.02.2000



12

SINGING

Dana (Saudi Arabia) & Mona (Tunisia)

27.03.2001



14

TCHAIKOVSKY

Stephanie (France) & Gabriella (South Africa)

04.08.2003



13

OLDEST CHILD

Randy (USA) & Milinda (Germany)

20.11.2002



15

TERRIBLE MEMORIES

Angie (UK) & Cathy (UK)

28.03.2004



16

FOOTBALL

Emma (England) & Kevin (Honduras)

29.03.2005



17

TECHNO

David (Germany) & Joao (Portugal)

14.05.2006



18

LEFT-HANDED

Martin (Scotland) & Nestor (USA)

24.03.2007



19

QUEER

Sabina (USA) & Ollie (London)

05.09.2008



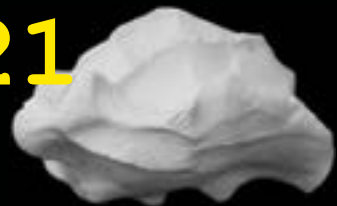
20

EAST GERMAN CHILDHOOD

Sebastian (Germany) & Diana (Germany)

14.09.2009

21



TASTE

Emmanuela (Italy) & Oscar (France)

15.06.2010

23



FRECKLES

Sigrid (Sweden) & Conor (Ireland)

07.07.2012

26



CLUMSINESS

Lo (Singapore) & Camila (Peru)

06.03.2015

27



POST-PUNK

Lysander (Germany) & Tatiana (Colombia)

30.04.2016

22



BAD RELATIONSHIP WITH FATHER

Thomas (Germany) & Thiery (Australia)

15.06.2011

24



SAME SHOE SIZE

Lukas (Spain) & Anna (Russia)

06.05.2013

25



LIVING WITH AUTISM

Rudy (Luxemburg) & Sasha (Bulgaria)

23.09.2014

28



INSOMNIA

Peter (Ukraine) & Denise (Turkey)

09.09.2017

29



SHORT-SIGHTED

Tina (Germany) & Viktor (Poland)

15.01.2018

30



TRUST

Lena (Germany) & Hauke (Germany)

05.06.2019



CREATUALS

WE TURN COMPLEX SOCIAL ISSUES INTO POWERFUL AND
UNIQUE EXPERIENCES. THOSE EXPERIENCES WE CALL
CREATUALS—CREATIVE RITUALS.

IVAN GABOR

CREATUALS ARE DESIGNED TO TRANSFORM A SPECIAL
OCCASION INTO A MEMORABLE AND MEANINGFUL
EXPERIENCE, AND ENABLE US TO RECORD THAT MOMENT
IN A TANGIBLE MEMORY, A WORK OF ART CREATED
IN A COLLECTIVE PROCESS.

MEIKE ZIEGLER

Since Dutch artist, multimedia designer and creative alchemist Meike Ziegler founded the Creatual Lab in Amsterdam 12 years ago, she has devised over a hundred unique creatual concepts, events, products and workshops for commercial enterprises, non-profit and cultural organizations as well as for individual clients. According to her motto—"Breaking Patterns. Moving Minds."—she invites people out of their patterns of expectation, creates unique spaces and experiences, lends new meaning to known objects and gives moments impact and memory. While developing the Handshape concept she joined forces with communication strategist Ivan Gabor and together they have brought Creatuals to the next level.

"A unique, custom-made idea put together using a few basic elements with symbolic meaning serves as the seed of any Creatual. This seed can grow into different directions, but the Creatual will always stay grounded and fed through its roots. It is my passion and my aim to get right to the essence of what's at stake in a particular context, and turn that into a creatual concept", Meike explains.

Shortly after moving to Berlin in 2016, she teamed up with Hungarian Ivan Gabor, who had spent two decades building media and advertising agencies in Hungary and Eastern Europe prior to emigrating to the German capital. Actually the two arrived in Berlin on the exact same

day, and soon found out they had more in common than that. "When we first got to know each other, Ivan and I had a long talk about our backgrounds and work—I with my creative rituals, and Ivan with his large communication network. I had been looking for a partner to help bring my Creatual concepts to the next level, and together create products for a broader audience. I instantly had the feeling Ivan could be the right person", Meike remembers.

"When I met Meike and she started explaining her Handshape idea to me I had the rare feeling: Brilliant! This could be my way forward", Ivan continues, and elaborates on his new role of Hungarian emigrant trying to build a new life in Berlin with his family. "After the great euphoria of the fall of the wall in 1989 we never thought that racism, division, or even fascist propaganda could return. But it did—in Hungary in 2010. All that had been built up over the preceding 20 years was suddenly shattered. If we had stayed, silently continuing our lives as our parents did, our new identity as citizens of the free world would have been lost. So we decided to emigrate, and chose Berlin as our new home. Emigration gives you the feeling of autonomy and strength, but nobody tells you how hard it is to find your new way. In this situation I was more than happy to come across something as deeply inspiring as Creatuals."

Meike continues; "After our initial meeting a further brainstorming session about the Handshape idea confirmed my first impression, and marked the start of our collaboration." From that moment they had exactly one year to find a financial partner, set up an organization, connect over 20.000 strangers and build a Monument to Human Connection, if they wanted to make the Berlin Handshape Project happen in time for the anniversary of the fall of the Berlin wall in November 2019. "It felt like jumping on an express train", Meike says. "And like jumping into an adventure!", Ivan adds.

Together they managed to pull off this project in just 10 months. Where often in Berlin bureaucracy can mean long lead times, this Hungarian-Dutch duo seemed to find the right approach, energy and enthusiasm to make it all happen. Since then Meike and Ivan have developed Creatuals into a concept design company, delivering creatual solutions for some of the most challenging projects in Berlin and abroad. "We believe that the very serious issues in contemporary society are far beyond human imagination. Just as in centuries gone by, the 21st century brings extreme challenges to individuals and communities across the world. Our main concern is not the nature of the enormous problems themselves, but rather the fact that existing methods of problem solving are not sufficient for the problems of today", the duo states.

It is against this less than optimistic backdrop that Creatuals seeks to offer a positive and fresh mindset; one that energizes and helps us move forward; one that drives our motivation to create a zone into which you can tap and find unexpected solutions, self-confidence and inspiration. In short: Creatuals is a journey to a place very close by. And this place is the mind. Creatuals is about stretching the mind beyond the ordinary, and breaking patterns on the way.

With Handshape and with other similar symboic concepts we hope to help connect more and more people. We are convinced that Creatuals can help people to retain their humanity in this fast-changing and digitalized 21st century.

Ivan Gabor & Meike Ziegler

CONTRIBUTORS

Initiators

Meike Ziegler
Ivan Gabor

Handshape Project Team

Cedric Lecat
Lara Kristiansen
Johanna Lucht

Project team *visitBerlin*

Lutz Henke
Sabrina Mehltitz
Alena Kreytenberg

Collaboration Partners

Robin Sontheimer
Renata Varga
Barbara Vid

Connectors Team

Chinatsu Ikeda
Coleman Pester
Sergio Guerra Abril

Sabina Smith-Moreland
Bruno de Sario
Francesco Barbati
Margherita Capuccini Belloni
Mia von Kolpakow
Victor Kasprowicz
Ambrose Pym
Jelena Murasova
Marion Bott
Carola Gentile
Paula Razeto Fernandez
Adelaida Pardo
Nathan Vanderpool
Natalia Irina Roman
Maria Nova
Carman Ho
Maria Filippou
Ksenia Antonova
Abdel Amine Mohammed
Davide Pedraioni
Marion Alphonse
Tejas Amea Ziegler
Alma van Woudenberg
Fadia Essam Elghrab
Dean Roberts
Elisa Nelvand
Zakia Bensidhoum
Annon Schaked

Location Coordinators

Soazic Guennec
Carsten Cremer

Digitalisation

Lindsey Elms
Chinatsu Ikeda
Margherita Capuccini Belloni

Social Media

Claudia Rodriguez

Film

Maxwell Kangkolo
Thomas Loos
Samu Gabor

Illustrations

Sofiya Vosnaya

Design

Julien Arts
Meike Ziegler
Nona Schmidt

Website / Database

Michiel Schoenmaker
Danny Kleine

Monument

Gert Jan Stam
Thomas Bohne
Stefan Scholz,
U & S Metallbau GmbH

Installation & Technique

Emilio Cordero Checa
Aleksander Jestrovic
Wojciech Wilk
Zbigniew & Maciej Pernal
Edon Jahaj

Supporters

Amelie Müller
Roham Sadough
Sebastian Pflum
Barbara Meyer
Paula Bender
Barbara Seher
Marc Dechmann
Christian Stahl
David Szauder
Aly Cha
Zabo Chabiland
Kimberly Lauren Bryant
Alexander Wolf

A Project by



Supported by

STIFTUNG BERLINER MAUER

Special thanks

Burkhard Kieker
Team *vistBerlin*
Axel Klausmeier
Team Stiftung Berliner Mauer

Éva Cs. Nagy
Paul, Maud & Luca Spies
Andrea Pissarczyk
Olga Ploeger
Kai Schlüter
Azu Nwagbogu



Stone skipping on the lake / Friendship / Love / Freedom / Do not like rich football clubs / Love for language / Grew up by the sea / Sense of giving back / Teaching art / Clumsiness / Being shy / Colorful hair / Two Belgians in Berlin / Black Pink (K-Pop) / Drumsticks / Lived in the GDR / Love nature and animals / Favorite color is red / Love for books / Hope for a better future for everyone / Common French ancestors / Football: both center backs / Superheroes and loyalty / German refugees / Living with autism / Love for snow / Impact of fall of the Berlin wall / The book "The God of small things" / Strangers to our countries / Like unicorns / Theatre and feminism / Both born in formerly divided countries / Invent games / Play ukulele and guitar / I still love you / I love you too / Not wasting our lives / Crossing borders / Children with special needs / Water polo / Warmth of human contact / Techno / Love helping people / Quit job to travel / Grandparents emigrated to USA / Jesus / Ella Fitzgerald / Improve women's working conditions / Fast and expensive cars / Live in the same London neighborhood / Bad relationship with father / Fear of spiders / Joy of life / Climbing trees / Turkish / Left-handed / Violence is no solution / Learning from history / Borders should matter less / Both our family histories are connected to the wall / Helping drug addicts / Bossa Nova / Freckles / Family connection Brazil-Germany / Both saw fall of the wall on TV / Became dads at age 26 / No Trump Wall! / Follow the heart / Want a job with impact //Similar moral mind-set / Same shoe size / Kids of a free Europe / Anti-Fascists / Dislike social media / Born in West-Berlin / Both insomniacs / Like to dance / Imbalance / Coping with health issues / Both want equality / Solidarity / District politicians / Beautiful eyes / Self discovery in India / Fell in love at age 16 / Everyone should plant a tree / Don't like country music / Berlin Mitte citizens since 1975 / Feminism / All people are equal / Capoeira / Listened to Canadian radio growing up / Power of imagination / We like women / Same salaries in East and West Germany / No food waste / Similar nightmares / Love gardening / Respectful communication / Mental health / Love swimming in the ocean / Climate activism / We are tall / Hoping for peace in Hong Kong / Tchaikovsky / Dust allergy / Singing / Queer community as family / Humor / Like talking to strangers / Two real Berliners / Italian ancestors / Martial arts / Working with refugees / Like the changing colors of leaves / East German Childhood / Love for art / Love for logic / The importance of dif-

ferent perspectives / Despair / Jewish ancestors / Both dreamers / Like laughing / Trust in surprise / Digest news through comedy / Late risers / Fear of flying / Architecture Stone skipping on the lake / Friendship / Love / Freedom / Do not like rich football clubs / Love for language / Grew up by the sea / Sense of giving back / Teaching art / Clumsiness / Being shy / Colorful hair / Two Belgians in Berlin / Black Pink (K-Pop) / Drumsticks / Lived in the GDR / Love nature and animals / Favorite color is red / Love for books / Hope for a better future for everyone / Common French ancestors / Football: both center backs / Superheroes and loyalty / German refugees / Living with autism / Love for snow / Impact of fall of the Berlin wall / The book "The God of small things" / Strangers to our countries / Like unicorns / Theatre and feminism / Both born in formerly divided countries / Invent games / Play ukulele and guitar / I still love you / I love you too / Not wasting our lives / Crossing borders / Children with special needs / Water polo / Warmth of human contact / Techno / Love helping people / Quit job to travel / Grandparents emigrated to USA / Jesus / Ella Fitzgerald / Improve women's working conditions / Fast and expensive cars / Live in the same London neighborhood / Bad relationship with father / Fear of spiders / Joy of life / Climbing trees / Turkish / Left-handed / Violence is no solution / Learning from history / Borders should matter less / Both our family histories are connected to the wall / Helping drug addicts / Bossa Nova / Freckles / Family connection Brazil-Germany / Both saw fall of the wall on TV / Became dads at age 26 / No Trump Wall! / Follow the heart / Want a job with impact / Similar moral mind-set / Same shoe size / Kids of a free Europe / Anti-Fascists / Dislike social media / Born in West-Berlin / Both insomniacs / Like to dance / Imbalance / Coping with health issues / Both want equality / Solidarity / District politicians / Beautiful eyes / Self discovery in India / Fell in love at age 16 / Everyone should plant a tree / Don't like country music / Berlin Mitte citizens since 1975 / Feminism / All people are equal / Capoeira / Listened to Canadian radio growing up / Power of imagination / We like women / Same salaries in East and West Germany / No food waste / Similar nightmares / Love gardening / Respectful communication / Mental health / Love swimming in the ocean / Climate activism / We are tall / Hoping for peace in Hong Kong / Tchaikovsky / Dust allergy / Singing / Queer community as family / Humor / Like talking to strangers / Two real Berliners /

creatuals.

Breaking patterns. Moving minds.

CREATUALS.COM

HANDSHAPEPROJECT.COM

A publication of Handshape Project GmbH, Gerichtstrasse 12-13, 10435 Berlin

All rights reserved for Handshape Project GmbH and the authors.