



## **Berlin, October 19, 2014**

The Detroit Berlin Connection aims to give the city of Detroit a new cultural center. The location; former Fisher Body 21 plant in Detroit, an industrial building designed by Albert Kahn in 1921 and closed in 1994.

The Detroit Berlin Connection, was started in late 2013 by Berlin social/cultural entrepreneur Dimitri Hegemann – with the aim of assisting in the regeneration and renewal of Detroit.

The concept and the vision of the Fisher Body 21 project corresponds to city's personality: the raw, imperfect, unfinished framing, the clash of old and new and quiet and loud – yet huge potential.

The project aims to incentivize community growth in Detroit. Through art, music, discourse, food, and a community focused development – the Detroit Berlin Connection wants to help to establish Detroit as creative lighthouse and a platform for cultural experimentation for the young and creative.

"What we did in Berlin became the most important cultural movement and economic force in Europe over the past 25 years. The strategic use of art and alternative culture for redevelopment and revitalization has reshaped Berlin. Together with Detroit volunteers and partners I want to imagine a similar, yet individual development for Detroit, a place we love and respect." Says Hegemann.

Since the Berlin Wall came down 25 years ago, the German capital has developed into an internationally attractive, popular location for business and technology and most importantly, a centre point for culture.

The creative Industries have developed into a vital economic factor, bearing a lot of future potential in regards to creative talent wide beyond the cities border and holding an important voice in the debate for city development and change. The development of this industry in Berlin continues to hold a large significance in the constant growth of the city. Every day hundreds of creatives move to Berlin.

For many years now, the Berlin based economic policy has concentrated on the innovate fields of competence. Here, many creative branches came together and profited from each other. The richness and diversity of Berlin's press market for instance, can't be found in any other German city. No other media market in Germany is as widespread as the Berlin based press market.

Furthermore Berlin plays home to over than 1,300 enterprises, agencies for product-, furniture- and industrial design which help give colour to the metropolis. Over 6.000 artists and 400 galleries make Berlin the city with the highest density of galleries in Europe and one of the most attractive places to create art. Thus, designers, agencies, lifestyle magazines, photographers and trendscouts are drawn to this ever-young city.

Berlin's music industry has also developed in to one of the most important in the world. From Techno and electronic music to World Music, Jazz, Hip Hop, Pop and Classical music: the Berlin music scene has established itself as a vital part of the world engine.

Yet before all of this – Detroit and Berlin shared a common energy and fate.

Hegemann's creative business credits have almost always focussed on special spaces – these are the springboards for his work – the industrial ruins left behind in a city plagued with change and uncertainty. At the helm - the Tresor club and the Kraftwerk Berlin, housed in a former East German power station – the building has successfully been repurposed in to a cultural centre, with over 230,000 ft<sup>2</sup> of creative space used for music, art, fashion and conference. Hegemann was recently cited by long serving Berlin Mayor Klaus Wowereit for his good works for the city.

Hegemann says his Berlin projects were directly inspired by the city of Detroit, and in particular Detroit's music – past and present. Detroit techno was the soundtrack to German reunification in the early 1990's and it was then that Hegemann met techno innovators Mike Banks and Jeff Mills of Underground Resistance - musicians and producers who believed that creativity and community activism go hand in hand.

"Without the support and deep involvement of the people of Detroit, we can't do anything. The community must benefit from what we do together. We want the neighbourhood to become collaborators," Hegemann says. "Young creative rebels need space to create. To Detroiters, we say: 'believe in your own ideas.'"

Together with Berlin and Detroit partners, Hegemann is attempting to use alternative business strategies to develop a space for artistic and cultural projects. The grounds outside the building will be remediated and converted into green space, with plans for urban farms and fresh and prepared food markets.

Hegemann's says talks for acquiring Fisher Body 21 are on-going. After initial reports that, if acquired, he plans to open a techno club not being entirely accurate:

"What we want to do is a center for innovation. Spaces for creative work, venues for performances," he says. "But do we want to have a space for a dance party? Yes, but that is only the engine, a catalyst for what we envision as an active space for art, music, fashion, healthy food, creative industries. We hope the City of Detroit and the people of Detroit will work with us on this project and many more in the future. Berlin did, and the city prospered."

The Detroit-Berlin Connection held a one-day conference, where Berlin and Detroit creative leaders and innovators presented and discussed ideas at the Museum of Contemporary Art Detroit (MOCAD) in May 2014. A second two-day conference is scheduled for May 2015.

The project aims to intensify already established connections between creative communities in Detroit and Berlin, develop exchange programs for artists, entrepreneurs and innovators and encourage creative commercial and residential development in Detroit.

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