



## Garden and Yard

courtyard and garden for an innercity residential ensemble  
Berlin - Prenzlauer Berg (D), 2017

*Site: Käthe Niederkirchner Straße 31*  
*planning: 2015 - 2017*  
*realization: 2017*  
*46 residential units*  
*450 sqm*  
*client: BAJ1 ltd*  
*architects: ABKW,*  
*Jochen Klein Architekten*

*Collaborator: Lorenza Manfredi*

A typical turn of the century Berlin residential building is carefully being renovated and extended by a few roof apartments. The ambitious development from historic substance is accompanied by a careful redefinition of the open spaces in the yard, in the common garden and in the newly private terraces.

The concept focuses on the material appearances and aims to give a simple yet elegant finish to yard and garden, developing the design closely from the given situation. Few elements and materials tie together the separated open spaces and those with the architecture. While (green) plants play a decisive role in creating the atmosphere of yard and garden, the rest of the elements are contrasted in black and white, reflecting the new (black) metal work on the building and the concrete white of borders and terraces.

The yard is mainly characterized by its centrally located whitebeam tree. New planting areas are introduced; planted with perennials and ornamental grasses. They will support the green atmosphere. The planting areas are framed by a low edge of concrete slabs. This light grey colour is strongly contrasted by an elegantly dark basalt mosaic pavement that has a relatively even surface. A wooden garbage 'cabinet' combines in the most compacted way the garbage. Set in steel frames, the walls of the cabinet are made of oak wood that will soon turn a warm grey colour. The sides of the cellar staircases and the terraces with their concrete pavers complement this colour scheme.

The garden profits from the urbanistic situation as it is part of the large, coherent green heart of the block. While separated by fences (and some old, charismatic brick walls) the individual properties in the block together create and share a park-like appearance. The redesign measures of the garden are to join into this set-up.



The existing topographic situation of “sunken terraces” is used to clarify the separation of private and common areas, while a generally open spatial situation is preserved. The topographic step is formulated by a continuous row of concrete U-stones with a base dimension of 40 x 40 x 50 cm. They formally continue the rhythm of the concrete terrace pavers, while the U-stones may also serve as a bench – at ca. 45cm height. Their outer border coincides with the border of private property. Next to the U-stones, a planted line (perennials, grasses, small shrubs) further mediates private and common. At one end of this line, the local excavation material (construction of terraces and staircase) is used to extend the “hill” of the existing ash tree into a small linear, planted mound. The common part of the garden is accessed through the new staircase from the cellar. It lands on a small square of basalt pavers, linking gesture and materiality of yard and garden.

The property is curtailed by a simple, transparent steel fence, powder coated in a colour analogous to the balconies, balustrades etc. A sandbox is “sunken” in the lawn, two simple play elements are positioned and a large blackboard is fixed to the wall of the left neighbour. One of the existing benches in the garden is kept. The planting focuses on sturdy plants that underline the spatial situation under the trees.

















