

Thielallee 22

The Slovenian Residence in Berlin



Ambassador's Foreword

An ambassador's residence is much more than an address. It is a place where a State presents itself, welcomes its partners, builds relationships and, through countless formal and informal encounters, gives substance to its foreign policy. In this sense, the Slovenian Residence in Berlin has acquired a significance that reaches far beyond its architectural and historical value.

The residence at Thielallee 22 in Berlin is also an important expression of Slovenian statehood. As a newly independent state in 1991, Slovenia had to establish, practically from scratch, a whole network of diplomatic missions and residences abroad. The diplomatic premises of the former Yugoslavia, in most cases without our agreement, continued to be used by Serbian diplomats. Slovenia therefore faced the demanding task of finding and securing new locations for its embas-

sies and residences at a time when it was simultaneously establishing its international legal and diplomatic presence. Against this background, when Slovenia, with the help of Ambassador Naberžnik and Mrs Gruhl (Butala) started using this wonderful house as the Ambassador's residence in Berlin, it represented something particularly meaningful for a young European state.

The residence has since served as a setting for strengthening bilateral relationship between Slovenia and Germany and also as a facilitator of friendly and peaceful relations among States around the globe. Successful diplomacy is conducted through negotiations and official meetings, but equally through conversations over a meal, cultural events, commemorations and receptions. This residence at Thielallee 22 indeed provides the setting for precisely this human dimension of diplomacy.

On a personal note – what makes this residence particularly special, however, is that it does not feel like a cold or purely official diplomatic building. It is also a warm family home. Its beautiful garden and the surrounding landscape create a sense of peace and belonging.

I will carry with me many special moments and memories from my personal and professional life in this house, which will always remind me that diplomacy is ultimately about people and relationships.

Dr Ana Polak Petrič

Ambassador of Slovenia to Germany



Located in Berlin's Dahlem district, Thielallee 22 is a residence of enduring elegance, shaped by a rich and layered history. Since 1999, the villa has served as the official residence of the Slovenian ambassador to Germany – but its story begins much earlier.

Welcome to Thielallee 22

Built between 1927 and 1928, the house forms part of the Wohnhausgruppe Thielallee 20/24, an architectural ensemble representative of the refined ideals of mid-Weimar-era residential design. With its balanced proportions, restrained detailing, and thoughtful layout, the villa exemplifies the quiet sophistication that defines this period of Berlin's architectural heritage.

Today, the residence continues to embody this tradition of thoughtful, high-quality architecture. Its role as the home of the Slovenian ambassador adds a contemporary chapter to its story—one that connects heritage with modern purpose and bridges Germany and Slovenia through diplomacy and cultural exchange.



Symmetry and Expression

Designed between 1927 and 1928 by architects Erich Rosenwald and Richard Hübner, the residence presents a three-storey cubic form topped with a low-pitched hipped roof. Its smooth, light-toned façade is animated by a rhythmic interplay of windows in varying sizes, introducing gentle movement into an otherwise composed design.

The original floor plan follows a symmetrical logic: a side entrance opens into a central hall connecting the main living areas – the salon, dining room, kitchen and study – while private bedrooms occupy the upper floor. Subtle Expressionist elements, such as angular window heads, horizontal banding, and refined cornice detailing, lend the house character without disrupting its restraint.

In its balance of modern functionality and elegant form, Thielallee 22 reflects the ideals of progressive domestic architecture from the late 1920s—rational, refined and quietly distinctive.



Timeline of Ownership

The property embodies a layered history of ownership that mirrors Berlin's architectural evolution and the political transformations of the 20th century.

The land was first sold in 1922 by the German Reich to architect Georg Honold, a resident of Berlin-Schöneberg. In 1927, it was acquired by Willy Wendschlag, who commissioned the construction of the villa that stands today. The house was completed between 1927 and 1928. Wendschlag, however, died during its construction and in 1929, the newly completed villa was purchased by Max Levi, a Jewish banker.

Following the deaths of his wife and one of his two sons from tuberculosis, Levi decided to sell the house between 1935 and 1936. Around the same time, he also decided to emigrate to London, where he settled in 1939, shortly before the outbreak of the Second World War.

During Levi's ownership, the house also accommodated a porter and his family. Later, the porter's quarters were converted into a laboratory by Dr Friedrich Boedecker, a prominent German chemist and deputy board member of the merged J. D. Riedel-E. de Haën AG in Berlin-Britz, who acquired the property in 1936.



Residential houses at Thielallee

Source: Archive of the Berlin State Heritage Conservation Office (Landesdenkmalamt Berlin), Bittner, 2008

A House Shaped by History

In 1945, following the end of the war, the villa was requisitioned by the United States military administration in Berlin. Boedecker did not remain on the premises and instead received compensation for its use from the Occupation Compensation Office.

From 1955 until 1999, the property was owned by the Federal Republic of Germany. During the Cold War, Thielallee 22 served as a residence for American military personnel stationed in Berlin, thereby placing it within the geopolitical landscape of the divided city.

In 1999, the villa was purchased by Marjanca Gruhl (née Butala), an architect of Slovenian origin residing in Cologne. She subsequently leased the property to the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia, which officially acquired the villa in 2017, ensuring its continued use as the Ambassador's Residence.

Today, the villa stands not only as an example of Berlin's architectural heritage, but also as a silent witness to Berlin's complex and turbulent history.

"The Slovenian ambassador at the time, Alfonz Naberžnik—whom we knew well from our days in Bonn—asked us to help him find a residence. After an extensive search, we found a suitable house from the late 1920s on Thielallee. However, the property was in deplorable condition at the time. I agreed to oversee the renovation of the building. However, the condition of the structure proved to be extremely challenging. Today, the villa is once again recognised as a fine example of the Art Deco era."

MARJANCA GRUHL, 2026



Erich Rosenwald was born in Berlin in 1871 and established his career as an architect in Germany's capital. In partnership with Richard Hübner, he ran an architectural practice specialising in villas and single-family residences, several of which are now protected monuments. Their most prominent surviving work is the villa at Thielallee 22 in Dahlem.

Rosenwald continued to practise architecture in Berlin until 1933, when the Nazi regime barred Jewish architects and other professionals from practising. Forced to remain in the city, he endured escalating discrimination and persecution. In 1942, facing imminent deportation to a concentration camp, Rosenwald and his wife, Margarethe, committed suicide in their apartment, choosing death over deportation.

His architectural partner, Richard Hübner, was also active independently in Berlin. Among his documented works is a commercial and residential building on Teltower Damm in Zehlendorf, completed in 1911. By the time the villa in Dahlem was commissioned in 1927, Hübner had already established a body of work in Berlin's southwestern districts.

Architectural Vision





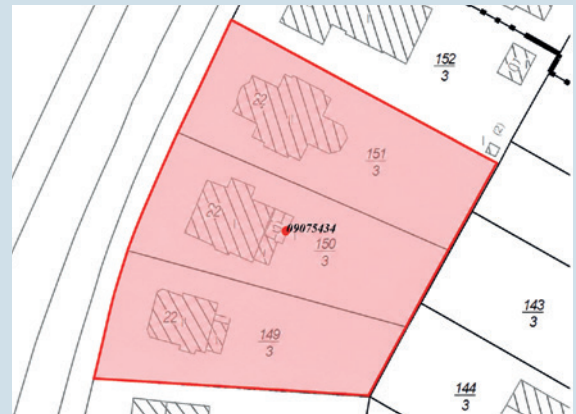
A Protected Landmark

Since 15 May 2001, the residence has been officially listed in the Berlin Monument Register as a protected historic monument. This designation recognises the property not as an isolated structure, but as an integral part of a cohesive architectural ensemble that also includes the neighbouring houses at Thielallee 20, designed by Paul Walcker and constructed between 1929 and 1930, and Thielallee 24, built in 1926–27 by Max Werner.

Together, the three villas form a representative group of early 20th-century residential architecture in Berlin-Dahlem. Their inclusion in the register underscores both their individual architectural significance and their collective value as a harmonious streetscape, unified by shared design principles and stylistic features.

The ensemble exemplifies a pivotal period in German architectural and social history: the late 1920s, during the brief phase of political and economic stabilisation in the Weimar Republic, when the medium-sized single-family home emerged as an increasingly prominent form of housing among the educated and affluent middle class.

These houses reflect the emerging ideals of modern suburban living – functional layouts, restrained yet refined aesthetics and an architectural response to the changing needs and aspirations of their time.



Cadastral plan with the land parcel marked in red.
(Source: Archives of the Berlin Heritage Authority
(Landesdenkmalamt Berlin).)

Over the decades, the residence has undergone only a few structural changes, preserving much of its original architectural character. One notable modification took place in 1936, when a garage was added to the property. Above it, a winter garden was constructed, expanding the usable space while adapting the house to the needs and lifestyle of the time.

The addition was carefully integrated into the existing structure, maintaining the architectural language of the original building. The flat-roofed garage complemented its overall cubic form, while the winter garden introduced a lighter, more transparent element that opened the house towards its surroundings – an early expression of the relationship between indoor and outdoor living that would become increasingly popular in later decades.



A Thoughtful Addition



Where Past Meets Present



Between 2019 and 2021, the residence underwent a careful restoration and renovation commissioned by the Ministry of European and Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia. The works were led by the former Ambassador Franc But and architect Fred Kohn, with the aim of preserving the villa's historical character while adapting it to contemporary needs.

Key interventions included the restoration of the terrace and balcony using historically appropriate materials, as well as the complete renewal of the roof. The former attic was transformed into a habitable maisonette, creating additional living space while maintaining the proportions and architectural character of the original building.

Through these thoughtful interventions, the residence continues to serve as the Ambassador's Residence while also embodying the continuity of Berlin's architectural heritage and Slovenia's presence in the city.

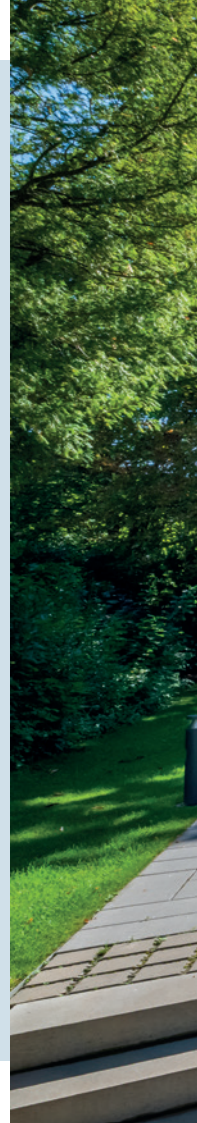
A Living Frame for a Historic Villa

The garden of the residence plays a vital role in complementing the villa's historic character, offering a peaceful green space that reflects the natural charm of the Dahlem district. Designed with simplicity and elegance, the garden features native trees, shrubs and flowering plants that shift with the seasons, enhancing the architectural setting.

A highlight of the landscape is provided by two remarkable trees: a linden and a wild chestnut, both over 100 years old. The linden also holds a particular significance as a long-standing symbol of Slovenia, where the tree has deep cultural and historical associations.

Together, these majestic specimens serve as living witnesses to the site's history while providing shade, structure and habitat for local wildlife, adding both ecological and cultural value to the property.

A recent addition to the front garden is a sculpture of a bear painted in the colours of the Slovenian flag, donated by the City of Berlin to the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia. The gift commemorates Slovenia's participation in the UEFA European Football Championship in 2024, symbolising friendship, cultural exchange and the shared celebration of sport.





The Residence Today

Today, Thielallee 22 serves as the official residence of the Ambassador of the Republic of Slovenia to Germany. Beyond being a private home, it plays a central role in Slovenia's diplomatic presence in Berlin, serving as both a formal and cultural extension of the Embassy of the Republic of Slovenia.

The villa regularly hosts a wide range of events that foster dialogue, friendship, and cultural exchange between Slovenia and Germany. These include diplomatic receptions, official dinners, concerts, lectures, and exhibitions, as well as celebrations such as Slovenia's National Day. In this way, the residence is not only a place of representation, but also a vibrant meeting point for artists, intellectuals, diplomats, and members of the Slovenian community in Germany.

By opening its doors to public and private gatherings alike, the residence continues to build bridges—honouring its architectural heritage while actively contributing to Slovenia's contemporary cultural and diplomatic presence abroad.

“The Ambassador’s Residence is an important instrument for the implementation of foreign policy and the representation of the country abroad, as well as being a residential property.

The functionality, location and level of representativeness of the residence directly impact the Ambassador’s ability to carry out diplomatic, protocol and promotional activities, and consequently the effective representation of the Republic of Slovenia’s interests in the host country.

A well-maintained, functional and appropriately representative residence enhances the country’s reputation, enables the effective organisation of official events and provides an environment conducive to establishing and strengthening political, economic and other international contacts.

Investing in the timely renovation, energy efficiency, security and functionality of the property also helps to prevent higher costs in the future and contributes to preserving or increasing the value of state assets”.

ANDREJ GREGOR RODE

Acting Secretary-General, Ministry of Foreign
and European Affairs of the Republic of Slovenia, 2026





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Sources:
**Landesdenkmalamt Berlin
Landesarchiv Berlin**

The publication was supported:
by the Ministry of Foreign and
European Affairs of the Republic
of Slovenia, Embassy of the
Republic of Slovenia in Germany
and Slovenian Cultural Centre –
SKICA Berlin.



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