

COLLAPSE VIII

A Guide to the Casino Architecture of Wedding

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Berlin's Wedding casinos can be found on most of the main streets and many of the side streets that connect this predominantly Turkish district to the rest of the city. Popular gaming streets include Badstraße, Müller Straße, Reinichendorfer Straße, and Schweden Straße. The architecture of Wedding casinos involves a broad range of exteriors, each evolving as a direct response to the particular demands of the gaming industry in this area of Berlin. The following examples are categorized according to similarities in location (side street, main street, corner and first floor casinos) graphics (colour range and printed image) and the positioning of the entrance (center entrance, side entrance and corner entrance).

The main street casino shown opposite is situated on Reinichendorfer Straße and is perhaps most closely related to Robert Venturi's notion of 'the decorated shed', which he used to describe a certain category of Las Vegas Casino. However, this familiar mode of casino architecture is uncommon in the Wedding district. Set apart from the residential apartments that stand behind the casino, the building stands as a detached autonomous structure. During the day, the general dimensions of the interior are made visible by the exposed end wall and low roof. The graphics are plain, but extend across the full width of the façade. At night, the neon lighting transforms the outer appearance of this main street casino, so that only the font is visible, and the shed-like structure of the rest of the building fades into the darkness.





Smaller casinos can be found on many of the side streets of Wedding. These gaming houses are located in small shop units, and use brightly coloured graphics to decorate the windows, doors and surrounding areas of the façade; normally printed on vinyl sheets that can be easily attached to the window area.



Side street casinos often have small projecting balconies above the main signage—conveniently providing shelter for customers who like to smoke between games. The close proximity to residential apartment blocks forces a sharp contrast between the brightly coloured signage of the casino and the mute tones of the apartment blocks above.

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Casinos situated on the corner of two adjoining streets (normally with the main entrance placed on the corner of the building) are popular throughout Wedding. These frontages are normally larger than the side street casinos, and benefit from being visible from a number of viewpoints.

The casino shown on the right is situated on the intersection of Reinichendorfer Straße and Schonealder Straße. The larger scale of this building reflects the size of the streets it faces onto. The main entrance is on the corner of the casino and faces two pedestrian crossroads. The heavy concrete structure above the casino is used as a VIP lounge for high stake gambling. The small mirrored-glass windows indicate a more sophisticated and exclusive mode of gaming.





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The distinctive blue frontage of the J.F. Casinos can be found on both the side streets and main streets of the Wedding district. The two examples shown here illustrate some of the main structural differences that have already been highlighted between side and main street casinos. The image above shows a side street casino integrated into the apartment building; it is situated in a shop unit and has small balconies projecting over the signage. The J.F. Casino shown on the right has all the structural features of a main street casino; set apart from the large apartment blocks behind, the long rectangular building consists of a simple low-rise structure. Like the Las Vegas ‘decorated shed’, this casino is designed to be seen from a car.

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City skylines are a popular graphic motif for many of Berlin’s Wedding casinos. The most common reproduction is of the Las Vegas Strip (see next page). Here, images of the megahotel casino resorts that line the Strip are illuminated against a dark desert sky. In the J.F. Casino shown above, the skyline consists of a montage of skyscrapers set against a backdrop of blue glazed bricks. On the right side of the entrance, the Berlin TV Tower hovers above the other tall buildings. These cutouts extend to the recess leading to the main entrance and across the doors of the casino. The side street J.F. Casino (left) uses the shop windows to show silhouettes of classical architectural motifs.

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First-floor casinos can be found above commercial units or inside local shopping centers. The architecture of these casinos often includes a large entrance onto the street. Access to the street is maximized through the use of signage and escalators. As with the other casinos in Wedding, the windows of the first floor (shown on the right) are blocked out with bright graphics printed on large vinyl sheets, only here the white window frames and yellow brick of the surrounding walls are left to blend in with the rest of the building.

The first floor casino shown on the right also illustrates some of the problems and difficulties that other businesses may endure when sharing signage with casinos based above street level. Here the Shell sign is set directly against an image of a slanting Eiffel Tower—creating a novel contrast to the rational design of most petrol stations. The entrance walls surrounding the stairwell soon become the most visible (and therefore most valuable) part of the building.





Black-fronted casinos can be found on many of the side streets of Wedding. A heavy black background is combined with red or white graphics to create strong contrasts and striking imagery. In daylight hours, the dark exteriors stand out against the lighter tones of their residential surroundings, creating a forceful and sometimes intimidating presence.

Casinos where the entrance is situated in the center of the façade (or central entrance casinos as they are more commonly known, see following pages) are less imposing and more informal than other gaming establishments in Wedding. On occasion it is possible to find tables and chairs welcomingly arranged outside; casino signs may also include 'café', 'cocktail bar' or 'sports bar' in the signage, and the window displays are not always entirely blocked out with casino graphics.



In contrast to their opaque counterparts, the central entrance casino will normally have small areas in the front window display for the passing customer to see the interior from the street. This more transparent mode of Wedding casino architecture shows consideration for timid customers who might not otherwise enter the premises.



With larger central entrance casinos (see over page) the window display may show images of interiors (in this case taken from Las Vegas). Here the internal world of the casino architecture is displayed externally.

