

NEW YORK

# Leipzig Instead of Berlin

By Jess Holl Published Oct 25, 2013



An artist-painted building in Karli.  
(Photo: Jens Schwarz/LAIF/Redux)

(*Jahnallee 23; 625-7848*), and **Chinabrenner's** spicy Sichuan in the up-and-coming Plagwitz neighborhood (*Giesserstrasse 18; 492-7715*). Among a stream of crowd-drawing festivals are the centuries-old Leipzig Book Fair (taking place in March) and the summertime Bachfest (named for Leipzig's most famous son), not to mention regular word-of-mouth open-air parties in the city's many parks and abandoned industrial sites.



on the sunny side of the canal in Plagwitz. **\$\$: Alt-Connewitz** (*from \$106; alt-connewitz.de*) optimally locates you in Connewitz's Karli bar district, nicknamed for its central artery, Karl-Leibknecht-Strasse. **\$\$\$: The Steigenberger Grandhotel Handelshof** (*from \$170; steigenberger.com*), housed in a former exposition center from the early 1900s, is perfect for more traditional sightseeing; Bach is buried in nearby St. Thomas church.

**T**hough Berliners snidely refer to the small city to the south as "Hypezig," most will admit that it really does feel like Berlin did ten years ago, thanks to a recent flood of young people (many straight from university) drawn to its thriving art scene, insanely cheap rents, and underground parties in converted department stores. The once rather bleak postindustrial town is now booming with an innovative culinary scene: Local favorites include the rustic vegetarian **Zest** (*Bornaische Strasse 54; 231-9126*), **Fleischerei's** ornate butcher shop turned bistro

**Population:** 530,000

**Distance from Berlin:** About a 75-minute train ride.

**Where to Stay: \$: Elster Lofts'** 29 minimally furnished apartments (*from \$95; apartment-leipzig.de*) sit

## A Künstler's Paradise

*Similar to what happens if you spend enough time in Berlin's Kreuzberg and Prenzlauer Berg neighborhoods, if you hang around in Leipzig's Plagwitz or Lindenau districts, it can seem like everyone is an artist or gallerist. Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the birth of the New Leipzig School of painters, the city's art scene has been steadily growing, now spawning a second generation of galleries that, like their post-GDR predecessors, are introducing new German artists to the world. Here, two gallery owners—one established, one emerging—point out where to find Leipzig's aesthetes.*

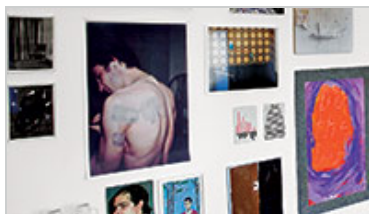
### **Older Guard: Gerd Harry Lybke**

In 1983, **Lybke** covertly began a gallery in his apartment, when it was still against the law to do so in the GDR. After the fall of the Wall, Lybke went on to open **Eigen + Art Leipzig** (*Spinnereistrasse 7, Hall 5; 960-7886*), accumulating an international roster of artists and introducing New Leipzig School painter Neo Rauch to the New York art scene.

“**The Baumwollspinnerei** (*Spinnereistrasse 7; 498-0200*) is an expansive former cotton-spinning-mill complex that, since the early nineties, has united the city's artists and other creative types. There are eleven galleries and institutions (including mine) showing the major Leipzig-trained and based artists. Be sure to stop by **ASPN Galerie** (*960-0031; [aspngalerie.de](http://aspngalerie.de)*), run by Arne Linde, who was on board from the beginning of the art scene in Leipzig and who represents a fresh roster of artists, like Jochen Plogsties and Grit Hachmeister. **Galerie Kleindienst** (*477-4553; [galeriekleindienst.de](http://galeriekleindienst.de)*) represents New Leipzig School painter Christoph Ruckhäberle, as well as other artists who work in a range of media, like Nadin Maria Rüfenacht, whose recent show featured a mix of photography and collages.”

### **Newer Guard: Katrin Klietsch**

**Klietsch**, an urban-studies Ph.D. candidate at the Bauhaus-University Weimar, opened **Kingsize Gallery** (*Grünwaldstrasse 19; [kingsize-galerie.com](http://kingsize-galerie.com)*) in 2010 and still runs it out of an unrenovated storefront near the city center, representing artists like Jana Engel, Andreas Enrico Grunert, Carsten Tabel, and Paule Hammer.



(Photo: Courtesy of Kunstraum Orloff/Sascha Herrmann (Wir Belohnen Sie, 2011))

“The **Weisscube Galerie** (*Mainzer Strasse 7; 404-5068*), located in an actual white cube in the backyard garden of a Bauhaus villa, creates a dialogue between so-called outsider artists, including those with psychiatric disorders, and already established artists like Enrico Meyer, who often curate the shows. **Orloff** (*Jahnallee 73; [ortloff.org](http://ortloff.org)*) shows mostly contemporary art, from text-based installations to graphic design, photography, and sculpture. The artists shown here—like Georg Weissbach, Ralf Hauenschild, and Sebastian Nebe—are often

graduates of the Academy of Visual Arts Leipzig. In 2009, the gallery launched **Ortloff Records**, an electronic-music label that only does limited-edition pressings, partnering with local Kann records for their distribution. The opening parties here are famously good.”

---

## Party in a Pension

*The nightlife scene in Berlin is a booming industry, but in Leipzig, the vibe is far more DIY, with the city seeing a rise of anything-goes multipurpose spaces. Here are three to check out.*

By day, **Kafic** (*Karl-Tauchnitz-Strasse 9-11; 140-8120*) is a café and contemporary-art gallery. Come sundown, it turns into a concert venue that hosts international acts and live electronic music in a cozy, living-room-like setting.

**Noch Besser Leben** (*Merseburger Strasse 25; 975-7330*), located in the Über-cool Plagwitz neighborhood, functions as a music venue, bar, and hostel. If you show up too late to fit inside the intimate performance space on the second floor, there's plenty of room at the bar below. And if you'd rather not pay for the cab ride home, book one of its seven rooms for around \$25, and you could be sharing a communal bathroom with the band.

**Kaufhaus Held** (*Demmeringstrasse at Merseburger Strasse; [held-leipzig.de](http://held-leipzig.de)*) is an over-26,000-square-foot former department store that a group of artist friends took over in September, after the building's owners okayed them to use the space for “art.” So far, this has included everything from a standard art show to a young-fashion-designer showcase and a few impromptu electro dance parties (which folks usually find out about the day of via Facebook). The crew plans to host live concerts in the store's former restaurant.