

Statement by the initiators on the current status of the public discussion regarding “Clärchens Ballhaus”/10 January 2020

(Appendix to the invitation to a public discussion at “Clärchens Ballhaus” / tbc. ore at an alternative venue)

The following guests have also been invited by email to join the panel:

- Yoram Roth new owner of “Clärchens Ballhaus”, Director of Roth Holding GmbH / Roth & Sohn GmbH, as well as artist, photographer and collector
- The architect commissioned with the renovation of “Clärchens Ballhaus” by Yoram Roth
- Dr. Klaus Lederer, Senator for Culture and Europe
- Ephraim Gothe, Deputy District Mayor and District Councillor, Department of Urban Development
- Herr Schmitz, Director of the Department for Monument Protection in the Mitte district
- Christian Posthofen, philosopher and lecturer
- Eugen Blume, curator and art historian, Director of the Hamburger Bahnhof from 2001 to 2016
- Constanze Kleiner, curator and gallery owner
- Chair: Claudia Kromrei

Statement by the initiators

Firstly, we would like to thank all signatories.

It is wonderful to see that so many people are prepared to personally engage with and share in the responsibility for things that are so important to so many people.

Just under 7000 signatures in only 11 days under the open letter to Yoram Roth, the new owner of “Clärchens Ballhaus”, are a clear commitment to our democracy and, at the same time, a sign of our openness to dialogue, both with one another and with the politicians acting on the behalf of us all.

We believe the heart and soul of the institution of “Clärchens Ballhaus” are the people who have filled this venue with life. The preservation of the building is, for us, only one part of the challenge.

Thus far, the managers have preserved the shabby charm of the old dance hall and developed it as a social venue and stage for people of all classes, all ages, different nationalities and gender.

They have not only continued to manage the daily business of the dance hall – running it just like it was “always” run – but have also strengthened the bond between generations, a bond that is rooted in our shared history. They did this with absolute authenticity for 14 years, right up until New Year’s Eve 2019. It is a unique achievement.

It is, above all, this living bond that is under threat – the current closure and the future (and, for the time being, temporary) operation as an event location in which “dancing is also possible”, would be tantamount to an irreparable amputation.

Going forward, the renovated “Clärchens” would merely be a shimmering stump, full of history, perpetually used to prop up new things – also many impressive things, of course –, but it would mean that this rare bond and, accordingly, the authentic presence of past generations, would be gone forever.

Moreover, “Clärchens” represents what has been so fascinating about Berlin since the fall of the Wall – and what is soon to be a thing of the past –, namely the co-existence of residents and newcomers, creative professionals and artists, but also blue-collar and white-collar workers, professionals and other “normal” people. People meet in cafés and clubs on a level playing field and talk to one another, find love and do business – this, too, is unique.

And the fact that this all still existed until 31.13.2019 was down to the successful and professional management of the hitherto existing licensees, Lisa and David Regher together with Christian Schulz (although it was by no means always plain sailing). They had a highly resilient crew of about 100 staff, who, up until the end of the year, were all able to make a living by working at “Clärchens”. To have put together such a team in the catering industry is in itself a masterstroke. This team is therefore also an important piece within the fragile construct that is “Clärchens Ballhaus”, and one that absolutely must be protected.

At all events, the open letter and the ongoing reactions of both the new owner and the city have led to a situation in which statements have been made against which, going forward, both the city and Yoram Roth need to be measured.

Furthermore, to date, there are still some areas of unclarity, but it will not be difficult to elucidate these. For example, by Yoram Roth making his development plans and investment budget public before his building application is approved. The city, in turn, could push through the development plan referred to in the press, which would effectively protect the garden attached to “Clärchens”, thereby giving credence to the commitments recently made by Ephraim Gothe not to prevent the authorisation of a daily dance establishment.

In addition, the city could give assurances in legal terms to Yoram Roth that although he fears that he must, at the request of the city, build apartments, which would seal the demise of “Clärchens”, these fears are unfounded. The signatories of the open letter to Yoram Roth would come to his assistance in this.

We therefore invite you / the public to a collective discussion, which we hope will take place before the end of January. We will confirm the date and venue in due course.

Eugen Blume and Constanze Kleiner

www.berlin-for-claerchens.de