

## Press Release

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### **Statement by the Architecture Section of the Akademie der Künste on the planned closing of the Galeries Lafayette department store in Berlin**

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According to press reports, the closing of the Galeries Lafayette department store on Berlin's Friedrichstrasse will take place earlier than originally planned, on 31 July of this year. This brings new urgency to the discussion on the future utilisation of the Jean Nouvel building. **In light of current developments, we as members of the Architecture Section of the Akademie der Künste are calling for a serious restart of the debate that Senator for Culture Joe Chialo initiated on turning the department store into the new home of Berlin's Central and Regional Library.** With its international expertise, the Architecture Section of the Akademie der Künste can offer a neutral platform for this discussion. The developments surrounding Galeries Lafayette can, after all, serve as an opportunity for public communication of some of the central issues of the contemporary architectural and urban discourse:

1. Conservation of resources through conversion and modification of existing building substance is a climate policy imperative. Such an approach can help prevent the overuse of raw materials and the expansion of our ecological footprint that is occurring through ever-advancing soil sealing, resource depletion and species extinction. It also allows for a preservation of the so-called "grey" energy that is contained in already constructed buildings. Architects and building developers therefore have an obligation to deal with existing building substance in a responsible way.
2. The decline of inner cities through changing patterns of utilisation and consumption calls for new concepts to invigorate public space. The closing of Galeries Lafayette is indicative of a nationwide trend that sees more and more department stores falling out of use.
3. Like every crisis, the planned closing of the department store also presents an ideal opportunity for a productive discussion on the significance of cultural usage for the identity of place, and on developing desirable models of transformation and future visions.

It is now important to take a bold approach to the debate and assume political responsibility. We are convinced that the re-use of Galeries Lafayette can serve as a positive model for the future.

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