



As soon as the Wall was opened up, many friends came to Berlin to grab a piece of concrete as a souvenir. One of them was Neville Brody, in the photo above carrying a hammer in a plastic bag, 1990.

Shortly before German reunification Erik Spiekermann visited East Berlin on two occasions: once for the opening of Grappa's offices in Berlin Mitte in 1989, and once to visit Wolfgang Geisler, whom he had met at the Forum Typografie in Hanover in 1988. After the fall of the Wall in November 1989 Neville Brody, a friend of Spiekermann's for years, visited Ber-

lin and wanted to see the changes for himself. »Everyone wanted to go to the Wall, and, since we'd moved to our office in Weinhaus Huth on Postdamer Platz at Christmas 1989, we were only a stone's throw from the Brandenburg Gate and all the goings-on there. Our office was right next to the Wall, about two meters away,« Spiekermann recalls.

Neville on Erik

Erik is one of those people. Everywhere you look, you come across him, better not cross him :)

I love him dearly!

Writing this, I'm shocked to realize that I have known Erik for nearly thirty years. He is like an older brother to me, and we certainly have a chequered history. He sways gloriously from inspiring to infuriating, from impatient to incredibly interested, interesting, and impassioned. A heart of gold, beneath that tough exterior lays the reason why Erik has always fallen short of his dream to become a global corporate executive! Let's hope it never happens to him!

We originally met at Type 87 in New York at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, I think my very first conference speech. I don't remember much about it except meeting Erik and Joan and Roger Black and David Bertow and Pinky in the lobby bar, and then getting really excited about this FontShop idea Erik was enthusing about. That, and the fact that I had been mistaken for the electrician by the conference desk on arrival and taken to the electrics cupboard behind the stage, a chastening experience that did little to help my confidence levels. I hated giving talks then, they terrified me, but Erik was so calm and confident and still is, completely at ease in front of an audience, the showman in him revelling on a stage like an MC.

We instantly became long-lost friends. I would join Erik and Joan frequently in Berlin, staying at Erik's wonderful flat in Motzstraße high above the first Metadesign studio, and we joined forces. I partnered them in FontShop, later launching FontWorks in the UK, and together we created FontFont. FUSE evolved from there, something I consider one of the most key ventures I've ever been involved in, leading to conferences and twenty years of really exciting commissions, collaborations, and design innovation.

Erik and myself are like left and right brain hemispheres. To Erik's structural engineering precision and detailed obsession, I was the chaotic and messy painter. Where I would invent stuff Erik would regulate it. Well, although

that's how it seemed, the reality was far different – in fact we are very similar – underground rebels (sometimes above ground too!), and coming from a background of alternative culture and left-leaning politics. In fact, Erik ended up teaching typography at the LCP not long after I graduated from there. We both share a love of systems, and exercise the same diagrammatic approach to design, despite appearances and outcomes. Our working relationship was perfectly matched through this balance, and we really did become like family members.

Gosh, if I think about it, Erik has been instrumental at so many key points in my professional life. Things that stand out include Erik MC-ing at FUSE conferences we put on. The very first one, held in London in 1994 at the Royal College of Art was a key event, the first live broadcast workshop in FuseLab, and the introduction to the wider design community of a whole raft of young designers who have since gone on to become household names, well, if you live in a design household that is.

Memories of that event include Vaughan Oliver terrified to speak at his first public lecture, getting drunk, and having a chaotic discussion on stage with an equally-drunk Graham Wood to the background of holiday films, as his slides had got lost en route. The other striking memory I have of the conference is of Erik running screaming across stage toward me red-faced at the end of my lecture looking like he was about to hit me. The crime I had committed was to say that I thought no one cared about kerning and that in that case it didn't matter to the public: a blasphemy in Erik's mind and worthy of dis-communication!

Equally strong was Erik's joy and excitement at the fall of the Berlin Wall and his love and mad knowledge of all national quirks and peculiarities. Our paths intertwined many times: FUSE Berlin 1995, San Francisco in 1998, both amazing events; type panels, conferences, just hanging out. Always passionate, obsessive, difficult, and a best friend, I owe him loads.



Neville Brody was art director of magazines ›The Face‹ and ›Arena‹, and has created record covers, typefaces, and corporate designs. In 1994 he founded Research Studios. In 1998 he initiated FontShop International with Joan and Erik Spiekermann, and the FUSE conference in 1995, which later became TYPO. He is also a dean at the London Royal College of Art.